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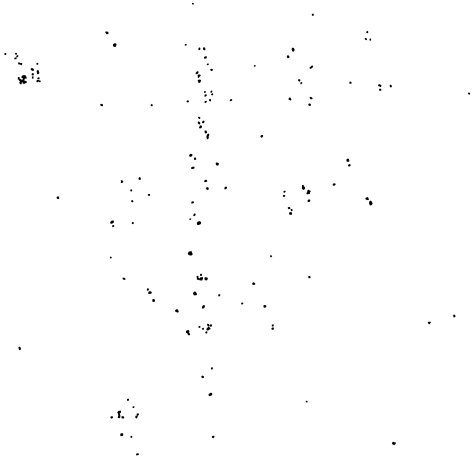

CAESAR OR NOTHING

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CAESAR OR NOTHING

by PIÓ BAROJA

translated from the Spanish by
LOUIS HOW

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ARTE SCIENTIA VERITAS

PROLOGUE

THE AUTHOR HOLDS FORTH IN REGARD TO THE CHARACTER OF HIS HERO

MORE OR LESS TRANSCENDENTAL DIGRESSIONS

THE individual is the only real thing in nature and in life.

Neither the species, the genus, nor the race, actually exists; they are abstractions, terminologies, scientific devices, useful as syntheses but not entirely exact. By means of these devices we can discuss and compare; they constitute a measure for our minds to use, but have no external reality.

Only the individual exists through himself and for himself. I am, I live, is the sole thing a man can affirm.

The categories and divisions arranged for classification are like the series of squares an artist places over a drawing to copy it by. The lines of the squares may cut the lines of the sketch; but they will cut them, not in reality but only in the artist's eye.

In humanity, as in all of nature, the individual is the one thing. Only individuality exists in the realm of life and in the realm of spirit.

Individuality is not to be grouped or classified. Individuality simply cannot fit into a pigeon-hole, and it is all the further from fitting if the pigeon-hole is shaped according to an ethical principle. Ethics is a poor tailor to clothe the body of reality.

The ideas of the good, the logical, the just, the consistent, are too generic to be completely represented in nature.

The individual is not logical, or good, or just; nor is he any other distinct thing; and this through the force of his own fatal actions, through the influence of the deviation in the earth's axis, *or for whatsoever* other equally amusing cause. Every-

CAESAR OR NOTHING

BROTHER AND SISTER

Many years ago I was stationed as doctor in a tiny Basque town, in Cestona. Sometimes, in summer, while going on my rounds among the villages I used to meet on the highway and on the cross-roads passersby of a miserable aspect, persons with liver-complaint who were taking the waters at the neighbouring cure.

These people, with their leather-coloured skin, did not arouse any curiosity or interest in me. The middle-class merchant or clerk from the big towns is repugnant to me, whether well or ill. I would exchange a curt salute with those liverish parties and go my way on my old nag.

One afternoon I was sitting in a wild part of the mountain, among big birch-trees, when a pair of strangers approached the spot where I was. They were not of the jaundiced and disagreeable type of the valetudinarians. He was a lanky young man, smooth-shaven, grave, and melancholy; she, a blond woman, most beautiful.

She was dressed in white and wore a straw hat with large flowers; she had a refined and gracious manner, eyes of blue, a very dark blue, and flame-coloured hair.

I surmised that they were a young married couple; but he seemed too indifferent to be the husband of so pretty a woman. In any event, they were not recently wed.

He bowed to me, and then said to his companion:

"Shall we sit down here?"

"Very well."

They seated therselves on the half-rotten trunk of a tree.

"Are you on a trip?" he asked me, noticing my horse fastened to a branch.

"Yes. I am coming back from a visit."

"Ah! Are you the town doctor?"

"Yes."

"And do you live here, in Cestona?"

"Yes, I live here."

"*Alone?*"

"*Quite alone.*"

"In an hotel?"

"No; in that house there down the road. Behold my house; that is it."

"It must be hard to live among so many invalids!" he exclaimed.

"Why?" she asked. "This gentleman may not have the same ideas as you."

"I believe I have. To my mind, he is right. It is very hard to live here."

"You can have nobody to talk to. That's evident."

"Absolutely nobody. Just imagine; there is not a Liberal in the town; there are nothing but Carlists and Integrists."

"And what has that to do with living contented?" she asked mockingly.

The woman was enchanting; I looked at her, a bit amazed to find her so merry and so coquettish; and she put several questions to me about my life and my ideas, with a tinge of irony.

I wanted to show that I was not exactly a farmer, and turning the talk to what might be done in a town like that, I threw myself into outlining utopian projects, and defending them with more warmth than it is reasonable to express in a conversation with unknown persons. The woman's mocking smile stirred me up and impelled me to talk.

"It would be worth seeing, what a little town like this would be," I said, indicating the village of Cestona, "with really human life in it, and, above all, without Catholicism. Every tenant might be a master in his own home, throughout his life. Here you have farm-land that produces two crops, you have woods, mountains, and a medicinal spring. The inhabitants of Cestona might have the entire produce of the land, the mountain to supply building-stone and fire-wood, and besides all that, the entrance-fees at the springs."

"And whose duty would it be to distribute the profits in this patriarchal republic? The municipality's?" he asked.

"Of course," said I. "The municipality could go ahead *distributing the* land, making the roads, cutting out useless

middle-men; it could keep clean, inexpensive hotels for the foreigners, and get a good return from them."

"And then you would not admit of inheritance, doctor?"

"Inheritance? Yes, I would admit of it in regard to things produced by one person. I believe one ought to have the right to bequeath a picture, a book, a piece of craftsmanship; but not land, not a mountain."

"Yes; property-right in land is absurd," he murmured. "The one inconvenience that your plan would have," he added, "would be that people from poverty-stricken holes would pour into the perfect towns and upset the equilibrium."

"Then we should have to restrict the right of citizenship."

"But I consider that an injustice. The land should be free to all."

"Yes, that's true."

"And religion? None whatever? Like animals," she said ironically.

"Like animals, and like some illustrious philosophers, dear sister," he replied. "At the turn of a road, among the foliage, we would place a marble statue adorned with flowers. Don't you agree, doctor?"

"It seems to me a very good idea."

"Above all, for me the great thing would be to forget death and sorrow a little," he asserted. "Not so many church-bells should be heard. I believe that we ought even to suppress the maxim about love for one's neighbour. Make it the duty of the state or the municipality to take care of the sick and the crippled, and leave men the illusion of living healthy in a healthy world."

"Ah! What very ugly ideas you have!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, that one seems a bit hard to me," said I.

We were walking down toward the town by a steep and rocky path. It was beginning to grow dusk, the river shone with silvery reflections, and the toads broke the silence of the twilight with the sonorous, flute-like note of their croaking.

On arriving at the highway we said good-bye; they took the

stage, which was passing at that moment in the direction of the springs, and I mounted my hack.

IN MY GARDEN

I had learned that the brother and sister were named Caesar and Laura, that she lived in Italy and was married.

Some days later, toward evening, they knocked at my house door. I let them in, showed them to my garden, and conducted them to a deserted summer-house, a few sticks put together, on the bank of the river.

Laura strolled through an orchard, gathered a few apples, and then, with her brother's aid and mine, seated herself on the trunk of a tree that leant over the river, and sat there gazing at it.

While she was taking it in, her brother Caesar started to talk. Without any preliminary explanation, he talked to me about his family, about his life, about his ideas and his political plans. He expressed himself with ease and strength; but he had the uneasy expression of a man who is afraid of something.

"I figure," he said, "that I know what there is to do in Spain. I shall be an instrument. It is for that that I am training myself. I want to create all my ideas, habits, prejudices, with a view to the rôle I am going to play."

"You do not know what Spain is like," said Laura. "Life is very hard here."

"I know that well. There is no social system here, there is nothing established; therefore it is easier to create one for oneself."

"Yes, but some protection is requisite."

"Oh, I will find that."

"Where?"

"I think those Church people we knew in Rome will do for me."

"But you are not a Clerical."

"No."

"And do you want to start your career by deceiving people?"

"I cannot choose my means. Politics are like this: doing something with nothing, doing a great deal with a little, erecting a castle on a grain of sand."

"And do you, who have so many moral prejudices, wish to begin in that way?"

"Who told you that accepting every means is not moral?"

"I don't understand how it could be," replied Laura.

"I do," answered her brother. "What is individual morality today? Almost nothing. It almost doesn't exist. Individual morality can come to be collective only by contagion, by enthusiasm. And such things do not happen nowadays; every one has his own morality; but we have not arrived at a scientific moral code. Years ago notable men accepted the moral code of the categoric imperative, in lieu of the moral code based on sin; but the categorical imperative is a stoical morality, a wise man's morality which has not the sentimental value necessary to make it popular."

"I do not understand these things," she replied, displeased.

"The doctor understands me, don't you?" he said.

"Yes, I believe I do."

"For me," Caesar went on, "individual morality consists in adapting one's life to a thought, to a preconceived plan. The man who proposes to be a scientist and puts all his powers into achieving that, is a moral man, even though he steals and is a blackguard in other things."

"Then, for you," I argued, "morality is might, tenacity; immorality is weakness, cowardice."

"Yes, it comes to that. The man capable of feeling himself the instrument of an idea always seems to me moral. Bismarck, for instance, was a moral man."

"It is a forceful point of view," said I.

"Which, as I see, you do not share," he exclaimed.

"As things are today, no. For me the idea of morality is attached to the idea of pity rather than to the idea of force; *but I comprehend* that pity is destructive."

"*I believe* that you and Caesar," Laura burst forth, "by

force of wishing to see things clear, see them more vaguely than other people. I can see all this quite simply; it appears to me that we call every person moral who behaves well, and on the contrary, one that does wicked deeds is called immoral and is punished."

"But you prejudge the question," exclaimed Caesar; "you take it as settled beforehand. You say, good and evil exist. . . ."

"And don't they exist?"

"I don't know."

"So that if they gave you the task of judging mankind, you would see no difference between Don Juan Tenorio and Saint Francis of Assisi?"

"Perhaps it was the saint who had the more pleasure, who was the more vicious."

"How atrocious!"

"No, because the pleasure one has is the criterion, not the manner of getting it. As for me, what is called a life of pleasure bores me."

"And judging from the little I know of it, it does me too," said I.

"I see life in general," he continued, "as something dark, gloomy, and unattractive."

"Then you gentlemen do not place the devil in this life, since this life seems unattractive to you. Where do you find him?"

"Nowhere, I think," replied Caesar; "the devil is a stupid invention."

AT TWILIGHT

The twilight was beginning.

"It is chilly here by the river," I said. "Let us go to the house."

We went up by a sloping path between pear-trees, and reached the vestibule of the house. From afar we heard the sound of the stage-coach bells; a headlight gleamed, and we saw it pass by *and afterwards disappear* among the trees.

"What a mistake to ask more of life than it can give!" suddenly exclaimed Laura. "The sky, the sun, conversation, love, the fields, works of art . . . think of looking on all these as a bore, from which one desires to escape through some violent occupation, so as to have the satisfaction of not noticing that one is alive."

"Because noticing that one is alive is disagreeable," replied her brother.

"And why?"

"The idea! Why? Because life is not an idyll, not by a good deal. We live by killing, destroying everything there is around us; we get to be something by ridding ourselves of our enemies. We are in a constant struggle."

"I don't see this struggle. Formerly, when men were savages, perhaps. . . . But now!"

"Now, just the same. The one difference is that the material struggle, with the muscles, has been changed to an intellectual one, a social one. Nowadays, it is evident, a man does not have to hunt the bull or the wild boar in the prairies; he finds their dead bodies at the butcher's. Neither does the modern citizen have to knock his rival down to overcome him; nowadays the enemy is conquered at the desk, in the factory, in the editor's office, in the laboratory. . . . The struggle is just as infuriated and violent as it was in the depths of the forests, only it is colder and more courteous in form."

"I don't believe it. You won't convince me."

Laura plucked a branch of white blossoms from a wild-rose bush and put it into her bosom.

"Well, Caesar, let us go to the hotel," she said; "it is very late."

"I will escort you a little way," I suggested.

We went out on the highway. The night was palpitating as it filled itself with stars. Laura hummed Neapolitan songs. We walked along a little while without speaking, gazing at Jupiter, who shone resplendent.

"*And you* have the conviction that you will succeed?" I suddenly asked Caesar.

"Yes. More than anything else I have the vocation for being an instrument. If I win success, I shall be a great figure; if I go to pieces, those who know me will say: 'He was an upstart; he was a thief.' Or perhaps they may say that I was a poor sort, because men who have the ambition to be social forces never get an unprejudiced epitaph."

"And what will you do in a practical way, if you succeed?"

"Something like what you dream of. And how shall I do it? By destroying magnates, by putting an end to the power of the rich, subduing the middle-class. . . . I would hand over the land to the peasants, I would send delegates to the provinces to make hygiene obligatory, and my dictatorship should tear the nets of religion, of property, of theocracy . . ."

"What nonsense!" murmured Laura.

"My sister doesn't believe in me," Caesar exclaimed, smiling.

"Oh, yes, *bambino,*" she replied. "Yes, I believe in you. Only, why must you have such silly ambitions?"

We were getting near the bath establishment, and when we came in front of it we said good-bye.

Laura was starting the next day to Biarritz, and Caesar for Madrid.

We pressed one another's hands affectionately.

"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, doctor!"

"Good luck!"

They went along toward the establishment, and I returned home by the highway, envying the energy of that man, who was getting himself ready to fight for an ideal. And I thought with melancholy of the monotonous life of the little town.

I

THE PARIS-VENTIMIGLIA EXPRESS

MARSEILLES!

THE fast Paris-Ventimiglia train, one of the Grand European Expresses, had stopped a moment at Marseilles.

It was about seven in the morning of a winter day. The huge cars, with their bevelled-glass windows, dripped water from all parts; the locomotive puffed, resting from its run, and the bellows between car and car, like great accordeons, had black drops slipping down their corrugations.

The rails shone; they crossed over one another, and fled into the distance until lost to sight. The train windows were shut; silence reigned in the station; from time to time there resounded a violent hammering on the axles; a curtain here or there was raised, and behind the misted glass the dishevelled head of a woman appeared.

In the dining-car a waiter went about preparing the tables for breakfast; two or three gentlemen, wrapped in their ulsters, their caps pulled down, were seated at the tables by the windows and kept yawning.

At one of the little tables at the end Laura and Caesar had installed themselves.

"Did you sleep, sister?" he asked.

"Yes. I did. Splendidly. And you?"

"I didn't. I can't sleep on the train."

"That's evident."

"I look so bad, eh?" and Caesar examined himself in one of the car mirrors. "I certainly am absurdly pale."

"The weather is just as horrible as ever," she added.

They had left a Paris frozen and dark. During the whole

night the cold had been most intense. One hadn't been able to put a head outside the car; snow and a furious wind had had their own violent way.

"When we reach the Mediterranean, it will change," Laura had said.

It had not; they were on the edge of the sea and the cold continued intense and the weather dark.

HOW BEAUTIFUL!

The train began its journey again; the houses of Marseilles could be seen through the morning haze; the Mediterranean appeared, greenish, whitish, and fields covered with hoar-frost.

"What horrid weather!" exclaimed Laura, shuddering. "I dislike the cold more and more all the time."

The dining-car waiter came and filled their cups with *café-au-lait*. Laura drew off her gloves and took one of the hot cups between her white hands.

"Oh, this is comforting!" she said.

Caesar began to sip the boiling liquid.

"I don't see how you can stand it. It's scalding."

"That's the way to get warm," replied Caesar, undisturbed.

Laura began to take her coffee by spoonfuls. Just then there come into the dining-car a tall blond gentleman and a young, charming lady, each smarter than the other. The man bowed to Laura with much formality.

"Who is he?" asked Caesar.

"He is the second son of Lord Marchmont, and he has married a Yankee millionairess."

"You knew him in Rome?"

"No, I knew him at Florence last year, and he paid me attention rather boldly."

"He is looking at you a lot now."

"He is capable of thinking that I am off on an adventure with you."

"Possibly. She is a magnificent woman."

"*Right you are.* She is a marvel. She is almost too pretty. *She shows no character*; she has no air of breeding."

"There doesn't seem to be any great congeniality between them."

"No, they don't get on very well. But come along, pay, let's go. So many people are coming in here."

Laura got up, and after her, Caesar. As she passed, one heard the swish of her silk petticoats. The travellers looked at her with admiration.

"I believe these people envy me," said Caesar philosophically.

"It's quite possible, *bambino,*" she responded, laughing.

They entered their compartment. The train was running at full speed along the coast. The greenish sea and the cloudy sky stretched away and blotted out the horizon. At Toulon the bad weather continued; a bit beyond, the sun came out, pallid in the fog, circled with a yellowish halo; then the fog dispersed rapidly and a brilliant sun made the snow-covered country shine.

"Oh! How beautiful!" exclaimed Laura.

The dense pure snow had packed down. The grape-vines broke up this white background symmetrically, like flocks of crows settled on the earth; the pines held high their rounds of foliage, and the cypresses, stern and slim, stood out very black against all the whiteness.

On passing Hyères, as the train turned away from the shore, running inland, grim snowy mountains began for some while to be visible, and the sun vanished among the clouds; but when the train came out once more toward the sea, near San Rafael, suddenly,— as if a theatrical effect had been arranged,— the Mediterranean appeared, blue, flooded with sunshine, full of lights and reflections. The sky stretched radiant above the sea, without a cloud, without a shred of vapour.

"How marvellous! How beautiful!" Laura again exclaimed, contemplating the landscape with emotion. "These blessed countries where the sun is!"

"They have no other drawback, than that the men who inhabit them are a trifle vague," said Caesar.

"Bah!"

The air had grown milder; on the surface of the sea patterns of silver foam, formed by the beating of the waves, widened

themselves out; the sun's reflection on the restless waters made shining spots and rays, flaming swords that dazzled the eye.

The train seemed to puff joyfully at submerging itself in this bland and voluptuous atmosphere; the palm-trees of Cannes came surging up like a promise of felicity, and the Côte d'Azur began to show its luminous and splendid beauty.

Caesar, tired of so much light, took a book from his pocket: *The Speculator's Manual* of Proudhon, and set to reading it attentively and to marking the passages that struck him as interesting.

THE ENGLISHMAN AND HIS WIFE

Laura, when she was not watching the landscape, was looking at those who came and went in the corridor.

"The Englishman is lying in wait," Laura observed.

"What Englishman?" asked Caesar.

"The son of the lord."

"Ah, yes."

Caesar kept on reading, and Laura continued to watch the landscape which hurried by outside the window. After a while she exclaimed:

"O Lord, what hideous things!"

"What things?"

"Those war-ships."

Caesar looked where his sister pointed. In a roadstead brilliant with sunlight he saw two men-of-war, black and full of cannons.

"That's the way one ought to be to face life, armed to the teeth," exclaimed Caesar.

"Why?" asked Laura.

"Because life is hard, and you have to be as hard as it is in order to win."

"You don't consider yourself hard enough?"

"No."

"Well, I think you are. You are like those rough, pointed *rocks on the shore*, and I am like the sea. . . . They throw *me off and I* come back."

"That is because, perhaps, when you get down to it, nothing makes any real difference to you."

"Oh, *bambino!*" exclaimed Laura, taking Caesar's hand with affectionate irony. "You always have to be so cruel to your mamma."

Caesar burst into laughter, and kept Laura's hand between both of his.

"The Englishman feels sad looking at us," he said. "He doesn't dream that I am your brother."

"Open the door, I will tell him to come in."

Caesar did so, and Laura invited the young Englishman to enter.

"My brother Caesar," she said, introducing them, "Archibaldo Marchmont."

They both bowed, and Marchmont said to Laura in French:

"You are very cruel, Marchesa."

"Why?"

"Because you run away from us people who admire and like you. My wife asked me to present her to you. Would you like her to come?"

"Oh, no! She mustn't disturb herself. I will go to her."

"Assuredly not. One moment."

Marchmont went out into the corridor and presented his wife to Laura and to Caesar.

An animated conversation sprang up among them, interrupted by Laura's exclamations of delight on passing one or another of the wonderful views along the Riviera.

"You are a Latin, Marchesa, eh?" said Marchmont.

"Altogether. This is our sea. Every time I look at it, it enchants me."

"You are going to stop at Nice?"

"No, my brother and I are on our way to Rome."

"But Nice will be magnificent. . . ."

"Yes, that's true; but we have made up our minds to go to Rome to visit our uncle, the Cardinal."

The Englishman made a gesture of annoyance, which did *not go unperceived* by his wife or by Laura. On arriving at

Nice, the Englishman and his Yankee wife got out, after promising that they would be in Rome before many days.

Laura and Caesar remained alone and chatted about their fellow-travellers. According to Laura, the couple did not get along well and they were going to separate.

IN ITALY

In the middle of the afternoon they arrived at Ventimiglia and changed trains.

"Are we in Italy now?" said Caesar.

"Yes."

"It seems untidier than France."

"Yes; but more charming."

The train kept stopping at almost all the little towns along the route. In a third-class car somebody was playing an accordeon. It was Sunday. In the towns they saw people in their holiday clothes, gathered in the square and before the cafés and the eating-places. On the roads little two-wheeled carriages passed quickly by.

It began to grow dark; in the hamlets situated on the sea-shore fishermen were mending their nets. Others were hauling up the boats to run them on to the beach, and children were playing about bare-footed and half-naked.

The landscape looked like a theatre-scene, the setting for a romantic play. They were getting near Genoa, running along by beaches. It was growing dark; the sea came right up to the track; in the starry, tranquil night only the monotonous music of the waves was to be heard.

Laura was humming Neapolitan songs. Caesar looked at the landscape indifferently.

On reaching Genoa they had supper and changed trains.

"I am going to lie down awhile," said Laura.

"So am I."

Laura took off her hat, her white cape, and her jacket.

"Good-night, *bambino*," she said.

"Good-night. Shall I turn down the light?"

"As you like."

Caesar turned down the light and stretched himself out. He couldn't sleep in trains and he got deep into a combination of fantastical plans and ideas. When they stopped at stations and the noise of the moving train was gone from the silence of the night, Caesar could hear Laura's gentle breathing.

A little before dawn, Caesar, tired of not sleeping, got up and started to take a walk in the corridor. It was raining; on the horizon, below the black, starless sky, a vague clarity began to appear. Caesar took out his Proudhon book and immersed himself in it.

When it began to be day they were already getting near Rome. The train was running through a flat, treeless plain of swampy aspect, covered with green grass; from time to time there was a poor hut, a hay-stack, on the uninhabited, monotonous stretch.

The grey sky kept on resolving itself into a rain which, at the impulse of gusts of wind, traced oblique lines in the air.

Laura had waked and was in the dressing-room. A little later she came out, fresh and hearty, without the least sign of fatigue.

They began to see the yellowish walls of Rome, and certain big edifices blackened by the wet. A moment more and the train stopped.

"It's not worth the trouble to take a cab," said Laura. "The hotel is here, just a step."

They gave a porter orders to attend to the luggage. Laura took her brother's arm, they went out on the Piazza Esedra, and entered the hotel.

II

AN EXTRAORDINARY FAMILY

JUAN GUILLÉN

THE Valencian family of Guillén was really fecund in men of energy and cleverness. It is true that with the exception of Father Francisco Guillén and of his nephew Juan Fort, none of them became known; but in spite of the fact that the members of this family lived in obscurity in a humble sphere, they performed deeds of unheard-of valour, daring, and impertinence.

Juan Guillén, the first of the Guilléns whose memory is preserved, was a highwayman of Villanueva.

What motives for vengeance Juan Guillén had against the Peyró family is not known. The old folk of the period, two or three who are still alive, always say that these Peyrós devoted themselves to usury; and there is some talk of a certain sister of Juan Guillén's, ruined by one of the Peyrós, whom they made disappear from the town.

Whatever the motive was, the fact is that one day Peyró, the father, and his eldest son were found, full of bullet holes, in an orange orchard.

Juan Guillén was arrested; in court he affirmed his innocence with great tenacity; but after he had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, he said that there were still two Peyrós left to kill, whom he would put off until he got out of prison.

As it turned out, Guillén was set free after six years and returned to Villanueva. The two threatened Peyrós did their utmost to keep away from the revengeful Guillén; but it did not work.

Juan Guillén killed one of the Peyrós while he was watering the flowers in the balcony of his house. The other took refuge in a remote farm-house rented to peasants in his confidence. This man, who was very crafty, always took great precautions about all the people that came there, and never forgot to close the doors and windows at night.

One morning he was found in bed with his head shot to pieces by a blunderbuss. No doubt death overtook him while he slept. It was said that Guillén had got in down the chimney, and going close to where Peyró lay asleep, had fired the blunderbuss right against him. Then he had gone tranquilly out by the door, without anybody's daring to stop him.

These two last deaths did not cause Guillén any trouble with the law. All the witnesses in the suit testified in his favour. When the trial was over, Guillén arranged to stay and live tranquilly in Villanueva.

There was a highwayman in the town, who levied small sums on the farms for cleaning young sneak-thieves out of the country, and for escorting rich persons when they travelled; Guillén requested him to give up his job and he did not offer the least resistance.

Juan Guillén married a peasant-girl, bought a truck-garden and a wine-cave, had several children, and was one of the most respectable highwaymen in the district. He was the terror of the country, particularly to evil-doers; for him there were neither scruples nor perils; might was always right; his only limitation his blunderbuss.

To live in a continual state of war seemed to him a natural condition. Half in earnest, half in jest, it is told of the truck-gardeners of Valencia that the father always says to his wife or his daughter, when he is going to have an interview with somebody:

"Bring me my pistol, sweetheart, I am going out to talk to a man."

To Guillén it seemed indispensable that he should carry his blunderbuss when discussing an affair with anybody.

Juan's energy did not diminish with age; he kept on being

as barbarous and brutal as when he was young. His barbarity did not prevent his being very fine and polite, because he was under the conviction that his life was a well-nigh exemplary life.

TENDER-HEARTED VICENTA

Of the highwayman's children, the eldest son studied for the priesthood, and the youngest daughter, Vicenta, got ruined.

"I should prefer to have her a man and in the penitentiary," Guillén used to say. Which was not at all strange, because for the highwayman the penitentiary was like a school of determination and manhood.

Vicenta, the highwayman's youngest daughter, was a blond girl, noisy and restless, of a violent character that was proof against advice, reprimands, and beatings.

Vicenta had various beaux, all gentlemen, in spite of her father's opposition and his cane. None of these young gentlemen beaux dared to carry the girl off to Valencia, which was what she wanted, for fear of the highwayman and his blunderbuss.

So she made arrangements with an old woman, a semi-Celestina who turned up in town, and in her company ran off to Valencia.

The father roared like a wounded lion and swore by all the saints in heaven to take a terrible revenge; he went to the capital several times with the intention of dragging his daughter back home bodily; but he could not find her.

Vicenta Guillén, who was known in Valencia,— for what reason is not evident,— as the Tender-hearted, had her ups and her downs, rich lovers and poor, and was distinguished by her boldness and her spirit of adventure. It was said of her that she had taken part, dressed as a man, in several popular disturbances.

THE MONK

While the Tender-hearted was leading a life of scandal, her *brother, Francisco,* was studying in the College of the *Escolapians in* the village, and afterwards entered the Semi-

nary at Tortosa. He did not distinguish himself there by his intelligence or by his good conduct; but by force of time and recommendations he succeeded in getting ordained and saying mass at Villanueva. His father's restless blood boiled in him: he was a rowdy, brutal and quarrelsome. As life in the village was uncomfortable for him, he went to America, ready to change his profession. He could not have found wide prospects among the laity, for after a few months he took the vows, and ten or twelve years later he returned to Spain, the Superior of his Order, and went to a monastery in the province of Castellón.

Francisco Guillén had changed his name, and was now called Fray José de Calasanz de Villanueva.

If Fray José de Calasanz, on his return from America, had not learned much theology, at any rate he had learned more about life than in the early years of his priesthood, and had turned into a cunning hypocrite. His passions were of extraordinary violence, and despite his ability in concealing them, he could not altogether hide his underlying barbarity.

His name figured several times, in a scandalous manner, along with the name of a certain farmer's wife, who was a bit weak in the head.

These pieces of gossip, though they gave him a bad reputation with the town people, did not prevent him from advancing in his career, for pretty soon, and no one quite knew for what reason, he was found to have acquired importance and to wield influence of decisive weight, not only in the Order, but among the whole clerical element of the city.

At the same time that Father José de Calasanz was becoming so successful, the Tender-hearted took to the path of virtue and got married at Valencia to the proprietor of a little grocery shop in a lane near the market, his name being Antonio Fort.

The Tender-hearted, once married, wrote to her brother to get him to make her father forgive her. The monk persuaded the old bandit, and the Tender-hearted went to Villanueva to receive the paternal pardon.

The Tender-hearted, being married, lived an apparently retired and devout life. Her husband was a poor devil of not much weight. The Tender-hearted gave a great impetus to the shop. After she began to run the establishment there was always a great influx of priests and monks recommended by her brother.

Some of them used to gather in the back-shop toward dusk for a *tertulia,* and it was said that one of the members of the *tertulia,*— a youthful little priest from Murcia,— had an understanding with the landlady.

The priests' *tertulia* at Fort's shop was a well-spring of riches and prosperity for the business. The little nuns of such-and-such a convent advised the ladies they knew to buy chocolate and sweets at Fort's; the friars of another convent gave them an order for sugar or cinnamon, and cash poured into the drawer.

The Tender-hearted had three children: Juan, Jerónimo, and Isabel.

When the two elder were of an age to begin their education, Father José de Calasanz made a visit in Valencia.

Father José had a powerful influence among the clergy, and he offered his support to his sister in case she found it well to dedicate one of her sons to the church.

The Tender-hearted, who beginning to have great ambitions, considered that of her two sons, Juan, the elder, was the more serious and diligent, and she did not vacillate about sacrificing him to her ambitions.

JUAN FORT

Juan Fort was a boy of energy, very decided, although not very intelligent. His uncle, Fray José de Calasanz, when he knew him, grew fond of him. Fray José enjoyed great esteem in the Order that is called,— nobody knows whether it is in irony,— the Seraphic Order. Fray José consulted several competent persons and they advised him to send his nephew *to study outside* of Spain. It is known that among her ministers *the Church* prefers men without a country. Catholicism

means universality, and the real Catholic has no other country than his religion, no other capital but Rome.

Juan Fort, snatched from among his comrades and from the bosom of his family, went weeping in his uncle's company to France, and entered the convent of Mont-de-Marson to pursue his studies.

In this convent he made his monastic novitiate, and like all the individuals of that Order, changed his name, being called from then on, Father Vicente de Valencia.

From Mont-de-Marson he passed to Toulouse, and when two years were up, he made a short stay in the monastery where his uncle was prior, and went to Rome.

When the Tender-hearted went to embrace her son, on his passage through Valencia, she could see that his affection for her had vanished. As happens with nearly all the young men that enter a religious Order, Juan Fort felt a deep antipathy for his family and for his native town.

The young Father Vicente de Valencia entered the convent of Aracœli at Rome, and continued his studies there.

This was at the beginning of Leo XIII's pontificate. At that epoch certain naïve elements in the Eternal City tried to initiate anti-Jesuit politics inside the Church. Liberals and Ultramontanists struggled in the darkness, in the periodicals, and in the universities.

It was a phenomenon of this struggle,— which seems paradoxical,— that the partisans of tradition were the most liberal, and the partisans of Modernism the Ultramontanists. The lesser clergy and certain Cardinals felt vaguely liberal, and were searching for that something Christian, which, as people say, still remains in Catholicism. On the other hand, the Congregations, and above all the Jesuits, gave the note of radical Ultramontanism.

The sons of Loyola had solved the culinary problem of making a meat-stew without meat; the Jesuits were making their Company the most anti-Christian of the Societies in the silent partnership.

In Rome the prime defender of Ultramontanism had been

the Abbé Perrone, an eloquent professor, whom the pressure of the traditional theologians obliged to read, before giving a lecture, a chapter of Saint Thomas on the point in question. Perrone, after offering, with gnashing of teeth, this tribute to tradition, used to say proudly: "And now, let us forget these old saws and get along."

Father Vicente de Valencia enrolled himself among the supporters of the Perronean Ultramontanism, and became, as was natural, considering his character, a furious authoritarian. This sombre man, whose vocation was repugnant to him, who had not the least religious feeling, who could perhaps have been a good soldier, took a long time to make himself perfectly at home in monastic life, struggled against the chains that chafed him, rebelled inwardly, and at last, not only did not succeed in breaking his fetters, but even considered them his one happiness.

Little by little he dominated his rebelliousness, and he made himself a great worker and a tireless intriguer.

The fruits of his will were great, greater than those of his intellect.

Father Vicente wrote a theological treatise in Latin, rather uncouth, so the intellectual said, and which had the sole distinction of representing the most rabid of reactionary tendencies.

The Theological Commentaries of Father Vicente de Valencia did not attract the attention of the men who follow the sport of occupying themselves with such things, whether or no; the presses did not groan printing criticisms of the book; but the Society of Jesus took note of the author and assisted Fort with all its power.

A fanatic and a man of mediocre intelligence, that monk might perhaps be a considerable force in the hands of the Society.

A short while after the publication of his *Commentaries,* Father Vicente accompanied the general of his Order on a *canonical visit* to the monasteries in Spain, France, and Italy;

later he was appointed successively Visitor General for Spain, Consultor of the monastic province of Valencia, Definer of the Order, and a voting councillor in the government of the Order.

The news of these honours reached the Fort family in vague form; the haughty monk gave no account of his successes. He considered himself to be without a country and without a family.

THE CARDINAL'S NEPHEW AND NIECE

The Tender-hearted died without having the consolation of seeing her son again; Jerónimo Fort, the youngest child, became head of the shop, Isabel married a soldier, Carlos Moncada, with whom she went to live in Madrid.

Isabel Fort lived there a long time without remembering her monk brother, until she learned, to her great surprise, that they had made him a Cardinal.

Father Vicente left off calling himself that and changed into Cardinal Fort. The darkness that surrounded him turned to light, and his figure stood out strongly.

"Cardinale Forte," they called him in Rome. He was known to be one of the persons that guided the Vatican camarilla, and one of those who impelled Leo XIII to rectify the slightly liberal policy of the first years of his pontificate.

Cardinal Fort filled high posts. He was a Consultor in the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, afterwards in that of Rites and in that of the Holy Office, and on special occasions was confessor to Leo XIII.

Certainly having a Cardinal in the family is something that makes a showing; and Isabel, as soon as she knew it, wrote by the advice of the family, to her brother, so as to renew relations with him.

The Cardinal replied, expressing interest in her husband and her children. Isabel sent him their pictures, and phrases of affection were cordially interchanged.

After that they kept on writing to each other, and in one letter the Cardinal invited Isabel to come to Rome. She hesi-

tated; but her husband convinced her that she ought to accept the invitation. They all of them went, and the Cardinal received them very affectionately.

Juan Fort was living at that time in a monastery, like the other monks. He enjoyed an enormous influence in Rome and in Spain. Isabel wanted her husband promoted, and the Cardinal obtained that in a moment.

Then Fort talked to his sister of the propriety of dedicating Caesar to the Church. He would enter the College of Nobles, then he would pass to the Nunciature, and in a short while he would be a potentate.

Doña Isabel told this to her husband; but the idea didn't please him. They talked among themselves, they discussed it, and the small boy, then twelve years old, settled the question himself, saying that he would kill himself rather than be a priest or a monk, because he was a Republican.

The Cardinal was not enthusiastic over this rebellious youngster who dared to speak out what he, in his childhood, would not have been bold enough to insinuate; but if Caesar did not appeal to him, on the other hand he was very much taken with Laura's beauty and charm.

The Moncada family returned to Spain after spending some months in Rome. Two years later Doña Isabel's husband died, and she, recalling the offers of her brother, the Cardinal, left Caesar in an Escolapian college in Madrid, and went to Rome, taking Laura with her.

The Cardinal, in the meanwhile, had changed his position and his domicile; he was now living in the Palazzo Altemps in the Via di S. Apollinare, and leading a more sumptuous life.

They reproached him in Rome for his exclusiveness and at the same time for his tendency to ostentation. They said that if he was silent about himself, it was not through modesty, but because that is the best method to arrive at being a candidate for the tiara.

They added that he was very fond of showing himself in *his red robes,* and in fine carriages, and this ostentatious taste

was explained among the Italians by saying: "It's simple enough; he is Spanish."

Publicly it was said that he was a great theologian, but privately he was considered a strong man, although of mediocre intelligence.

"A Fort is always strong," they said of him, making a pun on his name. "He is one of the Spanish Eminences who rule the Pope," a great English periodical stated, referring to him.

On receiving his sister and his niece, the Cardinal put all his influence with the Black Party in play so that they should be accepted by the aristocratic society of Rome. He achieved that without much difficulty. Laura and her mother were naturaly distinguished and tactful, and they succeeded in forming a circle.

The Cardinal felt proud of his family; and accompanying the two women gave him occasion for visiting many people.

Roman slander calumniated Fort, assuming him to be having a love affair with his niece. Juan Fort showed an affection for Laura which seemed unheard of by those that knew him.

The Cardinal was a man of exuberant pride, and he knew how to control himself. He felt a great fondness for Laura; but if there was anything more in this fondness than tranquil fatherly affection, if there was any passion, only he knew it; the fire lurked very deep in his overshaded soul.

Laura made, socially speaking, a good marriage. She married the Marquis of Vaccarone, a babbling Neapolitan, insubstantial and light. In a short while, seeing that they were not congenial, she arranged for an amicable separation and the two lived independent.

III

CAESAR MONCADA

AT THE ESCOLAPIANS

CAESAR studied in Madrid in an Escolapian college in the Calle de Hortaleza, where he was an intern all the time he was taking his bachelor's degree.

His mother had gone to live in Valencia, after marrying Laura off, and Caesar passed his vacations with her at a country-place in a neighbouring village.

Several times a year Caesar received letters and photographs from his sister, and one winter Laura came to Valencia. She retained a great fondness for Caesar; he was fond of her too, although he did not show it, because his character was little inclined to affectionate expansion.

At college Caesar showed himself to be a somewhat strange and absurd youth. As he was slight and of a sickly appearance, the teachers treated him with a certain consideration.

One day a teacher noticed that Caesar creaked when he moved, as if his clothes were starched.

"What are you wearing?" he asked him.

"Nothing."

"Nothing, indeed! Unbutton your jacket."

Caesar turned very pale and did not unbutton it; but the master, seizing him by a lapel, unbuttoned his jacket and his waistcoat, and found that the student was covered with papers.

"What are these papers? For what purpose are you keeping them here?"

"He does it," one of his fellow students replied, laughing, "*because he is afraid of catching cold and becoming consumptive.*"

They all made comments on the boy's eccentricity, and a few days later, to show that he was not a coward, he tried to go out on the balcony on a cold winter night, with his chest bare.

Among his fellow-students Caesar had an intimate friend, Ignacio Alzugaray, to whom he confided and explained his prejudices and doubts. Alzugaray was not a boarder, but a day-scholar.

Ignacio brought anti-clerical periodicals to school, which Caesar read with enthusiasm. His sojourn in a religious college was producing a frantic hatred for priests in young Moncada.

Caesar was remarkable for the rapidity of his decisions and the lack of vacillation in his opinions. He felt no timidity about either affirming or denying.

His convictions were absolute; when he believed in the exact truth of a thing, he did not vacillate, he did not go back and discuss it; but if his belief faltered, then he changed his opinion radically and went ahead stating the contrary of his previous statements, without recollecting his abandoned ideas.

His other fellow-students did not care about discussions with a lad who appeared to have a monopoly of the truth.

"Professor So-and-So is a beast; What-you-call-him is a talented chap; that fellow is a thick-witted chap. This kid is all right; that one is not."

In this rail-splitting manner did young Moncada announce his decisions, as if he held the secret explanation of all things tight between his fingers.

Alzugaray seldom shared his friend's opinions; but in spite of this divergence they understood each other very well.

Alzugaray came of a modest family; his mother, the widow of a government clerk, lived on her pension and on the income from some property they owned in the North.

Ignacio Alzugaray was very fond of his mother and his sister, and was always talking about them. Caesar alone would listen without being impatient to the meticulous narratives Ignacio told about the things that happened at home.

Alzugaray was of a very Catholic and very Carlist family,

but like Caesar, he was beginning to protest against such ideas and to show himself Liberal, Republican, and even Anarchistic. Ignacio Alzugaray was a nephew of Carlos Yarza, the Spanish author, who lived in Paris, and who had taken part in the Commune and in the Insurrection of Cartagena.

Caesar, on hearing Alzugaray recount the doings of his uncle Carlos Yarza various times, said to his fellow-student:

"When I get out of this college, the first thing I am going to do is to go to Paris to talk with your uncle."

"What for?"

"I have to talk to him."

As a matter of fact, once his course was finished, Caesar left the college, took a third-class ticket, went to Paris, and from there wrote to his mother informing her what he had done. Carlos Yarza, Alzugaray's uncle, received him very affectionately. He took him to dine and explained a good many things. Caesar asked the old man no end of questions and listened to him with real avidity.

Carlos Yarza was at that time an employee in a bank. At this epoch his forte was for questions of speculation. He had put his mind and his will to the study of these matters and had the glimmering of a system in things where everybody else saw only contingencies without any possible law.

Caesar accompanied Yarza to the Bourse and was amazed and stirred at seeing the enormous activity there.

Yarza cleared away the innumerable doubts that occurred to the boy.

In the short time Caesar spent in Paris he came to a most important conclusion, which was that in this life one had to fight terribly to get anywhere.

One day, on awakening in the shabby little room where he lodged, he found that the arms of a very smart woman were around his neck. It was Laura, very contented and joyful to surprise her madcap brother.

"*Mamma is alarmed*," Laura told him. "What are you *doing here all this* time? Are you in love?"

"I? Bah!"

"Then what have you been doing?"

"I've been going to the Bourse."

SOUNDING-LINES IN LIFE

Laura burst out laughing, and she accompanied her brother back to Valencia. Caesar's mother wished the lad to take his law course there, but Caesar decided to do it in Madrid.

"A provincial capital is an insupportable place," he said.

Caesar went to Madrid and rented a study and a bed-room, cheap and unrestricted.

He boarded in one house and lodged at another. Thus he felt more free.

Caesar believed that it was not worth the trouble to study law seriously; and he imagined moreover that to study so many routine conceptions, which may be false, such as the conception of the soul, of equity, of responsibility, etc., would bring him to a shyster lawyer's vulgar and affected idea of life. To counteract this tendency he devoted himself to studying zoology at the University, and the next year he took a course in physiology at San Carlos.

At the same time he did not neglect the stock exchange; his great pride was to acquaint himself thoroughly with the details of the speculations made and to talk in the crowds.

As a student he was mediocre. He learned the secret of passing examinations well with the minimum of effort, and practised it. He found that by knowing only a couple of things under each heading of the program, it was enough for him to answer and to pass well. And so, from the beginning of each course, he marked in the text the two or three lines of every page which seemed to him to comprise the essential, and having learned those, considered his knowledge sufficient.

Caesar had a deep contempt for the University and for his fellow-students; all their rows and manifestations seemed to him repulsively flat and stupid.

Alzugaray was studying law too, and had obtained a clerk-

ship in a Ministry. Alzugaray got drunk on music. His great enthusiasm was for playing the 'cello. Caesar used to call on him at his office and at home.

The clerks at the Ministry seemed to Caesar to form part of an inferior human race.

At Alzugaray's house, Caesar felt at home. Ignacio's mother, a lady with white hair, was always making stockings, and after dinner she recited the rosary with the maid; Alzugaray's sister, Celedonia, a tall ungainly lass, was often ill.

All the family thought a great deal of Caesar; his advice was followed at that house, and one of the operations on 'change that he recommended making with some Foreign bonds that Ignacio's mother was holding at the time of the Cuban War, gave everybody in the house an extraordinary idea of young Moncada's financial talents.

Caesar kept his balance among his separate activities; one set of studies complemented others. This diversity of points of view kept him from taking the false and one-sided position that those who preoccupy themselves with one branch of knowledge exclusively get into.

The one-sided position is most useful to a specialist, to a man who expects to remain satisfied in the place where chance has put him; but it is useless for one who proposes to enter life with his blood afire.

As almost always occurs, the projecting of ideas of distinct derivation and of different orders into the same plane, carried Caesar into absolute scepticism, scepticism about things, and especially scepticism about the instrument of knowledge.

His negation had no reference,— far from it,— to women, to love, or to friends, things where the pedantic and ostentatious scepticism of literary men of the Larra type usually finds its fodder; his nihilism was much more the confusion and discomposure of one that explores a region well or badly, and finds no landmarks there, no paths, and returns with a belief *that even the* compass is not exact in what it shows.

"*Nothing absolute* exists," Caesar told himself, "neither

science nor mathematics nor even the truth, can be an absolute thing."

Arriving at this result surprised Caesar a good deal. On finding that he was not successful in lighting on a philosophical system which would be a guide to him and which could be reasoned out like a theorem, he sought within the purely subjective for something that might satisfy him and serve as a standard.

A PHILOSOPHY

Toward the end of their course Caesar presented himself one day in his friend Alzugaray's office.

"I think," he said, "that I am getting my philosophy into shape."

"My dear man!"

"Yes. I have tacked some new contours on to my Darwinian pragmatism."

Alzugaray, in whom every treasure-trove of his friend's always produced great surprise, stood staring naïvely at him.

"Yes, I am building up my system," Caesar went on, "a system within relative truth. It is clear."

"Let's hear what it is."

"In regard to us," said Caesar, as if he were speaking of something that had happened in the street a few minutes before, "our uncertain instrument of knowledge makes two apparent states of nature seem real to us; one, the static, in which things are perceived by us as motionless; the other, the dynamic, wherein these same things are found in motion. It is clear that in reality everything is in motion; but within the relative truth of our ideas we are able to believe that there are some things in repose and others in action. Isn't that so?"

"Yes. That is, I think so," replied Alzugaray, who was beginning to wonder if the whole earth was trembling under his feet.

"Good!" Caesar continued. "I am going to pass from nature to life: I am going to assume that life has a purpose. Where *can this* purpose be found? We don't know. But

what can be the machinery of this purpose? Only movement, action. That is to say, struggle. This assertion once made, I am going to take a hand in carrying it out. The things we call spiritual also are dynamic. Who says anything whatsoever says matter and force; who says force affirms attraction and repulsion; attraction and repulsion are synonymous with movement, with struggle, with action. Now I am inside of my system. It will consist of putting all the forces near me into movement, into action, into struggle. What pleasure may there be in this? First, the pleasure of doing, the pleasure, we might call it, of efficiency; secondly, the pleasure of seeing, the pleasure of observing. . . . What do you think of it?"

"Fine, man! The things you start are always good."

"Then there is the moral point. I think I have settled that too."

"That too?"

"Yes. Morals should be nothing more than the true, fitting, and natural law of man. Man considered solely as a spiritual machine? No. Considered as an animal that eats and drinks? Not that either. Man considered as a complete whole. Isn't that so?"

"I believe it is."

"I proceed. In nature laws become more obscure, according as more complicated objects of knowledge turn up. We all clearly see the law of the triangle, and the law of oxygen or of carbon with the same clearness. These laws appear to us as being without exception. But then comes the mineral, and we begin to see variations; in this form it exerts one attraction, in that form a different one. We ascend to the vegetable and find a sort of surprise-package. The surprises are centupled in the animal; and are raised to an unknown degree in man. What is the law of man, as man? We do not know it, probably we shall never know it. Right and justice may be truths, but they will always be fractional truths. *Traditional* morality is a pragmatism, useful and efficacious *for social life, for* well-ordered life; but at the bottom, with-

out reality. Summing all this up: first, life is a labyrinth which has no Ariadne's thread but one,— action; secondly, man is upheld in his high qualities by force and struggle. Those are my conclusions."

"Clever devil! I don't know what to say to you."

Alzugaray asserted that, without taking it upon him to say whether his friend's ideas were good or bad, they had no practical value; but Caesar insisted once and many times on the advantages he saw in his metaphysics.

ENCHIRIDION SAPIENTIAE

Caesar remained in the same sphere during the whole period of his law course, always seeking, according to his own words, to add one wheel more to his machine.

His life contained few incidents; summers he went to Valencia, and there, in the villa, he read and talked with the peasants. His mother, devoted solely to the Church, bothered herself little about her son.

Caesar ended his studies, and on his coming of age, they gave him his share of his father's estate.

Incontinently he took the train, he went to Paris, he looked up Yarza. He explained to him his vague projects of action. Yarza listened attentively, and said:

"Perhaps it will appear foolish to you, but I am going to give you a book I wrote, which I should like you to read. It's called *Enchiridion Sapientiae.* In my youth I was something of a Latinist. In these pages, less than a hundred, I have gathered my observations about the financial and political world. It might as well be called *Contribution to Commonsense,* or *Neo-Machiavellianism.* If you find that it helps you, keep it."

Caesar read the book with concentrated attention.

"How did it strike you?" said Yarza.

"There are many things in it I don't agree with; I shall have to think over them again."

"*All right.* Then keep my Enchiridion and go on to

London. Paris is a city that has finished. It is not worth the trouble of losing one's time staying here."

Caesar went to London, always with the firm intention of going into something. From time to time he wrote a long letter to Ignacio Alzugaray, telling him his impressions of politics and financial questions.

While he was in London his sister joined him and invited him to go to Florence; two years later she begged him to accompany her to Rome. Caesar had always declined to visit the Eternal City, until, on that occasion, he himself showed a desire to go to Rome with his sister.

IV

PEOPLE WHO PASS CLOSE BY

THE SAN MARTINO YOUNG LADIES

ARRIVED at Rome, Laura and Caesar went up to the hotel, and were received by a bald gentleman with a pointed moustache, who showed them into a large round salon with a very high ceiling.

It was a theatrical salon, with antique furniture and large red-velvet arm-chairs with gilded legs. The enormous mirrors, somewhat tarnished by age, made the salon appear even larger. On the consoles and cabinets gleamed objects of majolica and porcelain.

The big window of this salon opened on the Piazza Esedra di Termini. Caesar and Laura looked out through the glass. It was beginning to rain again; the great semi-circular extent of the square was shining with rain.

The passing trams slipped around the curve in the track; a caravan of tourists in ten or twelve carriages in file, all with their umbrellas open, were preparing to visit the monuments of Rome; strolling pedlars were showing them knick-knacks and religious gewgaws.

Caesar's and Laura's rooms were got ready and the manager of the hotel asked them again if they had need of nothing else.

"What are you going to do?" said Laura to her brother.

"I am going to stretch myself out in bed for a while."

"Lunch at half-past twelve."

"Good, I will get up at that time."

"Good-bye, *bambino*. Have a good rest. Put on your black suit to come to the table."

"Very well."

Caesar stretched himself on the bed, slept off and on, somewhat feverish from fatigue, and at about twelve he woke at the noise they made in bringing his luggage into the room. He got up to open the trunks, washed and dressed, and when the customary gong resounded, he presented himself in the salon.

Laura was chatting with two young ladies and an older lady, the Countess of San Martino and her daughters. They were in Rome for the season and lived regularly in Venice.

Laura introduced her brother to these ladies, and the Countess pressed Caesar's hand between both of hers, very affectionately.

The Countess was tiny and dried-up: a mummy with the face of a grey-hound, her skin close to her bones, her lips painted, little penetrating blue eyes, and great vivacity in her movements. She dressed in a showy manner; wore jewels on her bosom, on her head, on her fingers.

The daughters looked like two little blond princesses: with rosy cheeks, eyebrows like two golden brush-strokes, almost colourless, clear blue eyes of a heavenly blue, and such small red lips, that on seeing them, the classical simile of cherries came at once to one's mind.

The Countess of San Martino asked Caesar like a shot if he was married and if he hadn't a sweetheart. Caesar replied that he was a bachelor and that he had no sweetheart, and then the Countess came back by asking if he felt no vocation for matrimony.

"No, I believe I don't," responded Caesar.

The two young women smiled, and their mother said, with truly diverting familiarity, that men were becoming impossible. Afterwards she added that she was anxious for her daughters to marry.

"When one of these children is married and has a *bambino,* I shall be more contented! If God sent me a *cherubino del cielo,* I shouldn't be more so."

Laura laughed, and one of the little blondes remarked with *aristocratic indifference:*

"Getting married comes first, mamma."

To this the Countess of San Martino observed that she didn't understand the behaviour of girls nowadays.

"When I was a young thing, I always had five or six beaux at once; but my daughters haven't the same idea. They are so indifferent, so superior!"

"It seems that you two don't take all the notice you should," said Caesar to the girls in French.

"You see what a mistake it is," answered one of them, smiling.

The last round of the gong sounded and various persons entered the salon. Laura knew the majority of them and introduced them, as they came, to her brother.

OBSERVATIONS BY CAESAR

The waiter appeared at the door, announced that lunch was ready, and they all passed into the dining-room.

Laura and her brother were installed at a small table beside the window.

The dining-room, very large and very high, flaunted decorations copied from some palace. They consisted of a tapestry with garlands of flowers, and medallions. In each medallion were the letters S. P. Q. R. and various epicurean phrases of the Romans: "*Carpe diem. Post mortem nulla voluptas,*" et cetera.

"Beautiful decoration, but very cold," said Caesar. "I should prefer rather fewer mottoes and a little more warmth."

"You are very hard to please," retorted Laura.

Shortly after getting seated, everybody began to talk from table to table and even from one end of the room to the other. There was none of that classic coolness among the people in the hotel which the English have spread everywhere, along with underdone meat and bottled sauces.

Caesar devoted himself for the first few moments to ethnology.

"Even from the people you find here, you can see that *there is a great diversity* of ethnic type in Italy," he said to

Laura. "That blond boy and the Misses San Martino are surely of Saxon origin; the waiter, on the other hand, swarthy like that, is a Berber."

"Because the blond boy and the San Martinos are from the North, and the waiter must be Neapolitan or Sicilian.

"Besides, there is still another type: shown by that dark young woman over there, with the melancholy air. She must be a Celtic type. What is obvious is that there is great liveliness in these people, great elegance in their movements. They are like actors giving a good performance."

Caesar's observations were interrupted by the arrival of a dark, plump woman, who came in from the street, accompanied by her daughter, a blond girl, fat, smiling, and a bit timid.

This lady and Laura bowed with much ceremony.

"Who is she?" asked Caesar in a low tone.

"It is the Countess Brenda," said Laura.

"Another countess! But are all the women here countesses?"

"Don't talk nonsense."

At the other end of the dining-room a young Neapolitan with the expression of a Pulcinella and violent gestures, raised his sing-song voice, talking very loud and making everybody laugh.

After lunching, Caesar went out to post some cards, and as it was raining buckets, he took refuge in the arcades of the Piazza Esedra.

When he was tired of walking he returned to the hotel, went to his room, turned on the light, and started to continue his unfinished perusal of Proudhon's book on the speculator.

And while he read, there came from the salon the notes of a Tzigane waltz played on the piano.

ART, FOR DECEIVED HUSBANDS

Caesar was writing something on the margin of a page when *there came* a knock at his door.

"Come in," said Caesar.

It was Laura.

"Where are you keeping yourself?" she asked.

"Here I am, reading a little."

"But my dear man, we are waiting for you."

"What for?"

"The idea, what for? To talk."

"I don't feel like talking. I am very tired."

"But, *bambino; Benedetto.* Are you going to live your life avoiding everybody?"

"No; I will come out tomorrow."

"What do you want to do tonight?"

"Tonight! Nothing."

"Don't you want to go to the theatre?"

"No, no; I have a tremendously weak pulse, and a little fever. My hands are on fire at this moment."

"What foolishness!"

"It's true."

"So then you won't come out?"

"No."

"All right. As you wish."

"When the weather is good, I will go out."

"Do you want me to fetch you a Baedeker?"

"No, I have no use for it."

"Don't you intend to look at the sights, either?"

"Yes, I will look willingly at what comes before my eyes; it wouldn't please me if the same thing happened to me that took place in Florence."

"What happened to you in Florence?"

"I lost my time lamentably, getting enthusiastic over Botticelli, Donatello, and a lot of other foolishness, and when I got back to London it cost me a good deal of work to succeed in forgetting those things and getting myself settled in my financial investigations again. So that now I have decided to see nothing except in leisure moments and without attaching any importance to all those fiddle-faddles."

"But what childishness! Is it going to distract you so much from your work, from that serious work you have in hand, to go and see a few pictures or some statues?"

"To see them, no, not exactly; but to occupy myself with them, yes. Art is a good thing for those who haven't the strength to live, in realities. It is a good form of sport for old maids, for deceived husbands who need consolation, as hysterical persons need morphine. . . ."

"And for strong people like you, what is there?" asked Laura, ironically.

"For strong people! . . . Action."

"And you call lying in bed, reading, action?"

"Yes, when one reads with the intentions I read with."

"And what are they? What is it you are plotting?"

"I will tell you."

Laura saw that she could not convince her brother, and returned to the salon. A moment before dinner was announced Caesar got dressed again in black, put on his patent-leather shoes, looked at himself offhandedly in the mirror, saw that he was all right, and joined his sister.

V

THE ABBE PRECIOZI

THE BIG BIRDS IN ROME

THE next day Caesar awoke at nine, jumped out of bed, and went to breakfast. Laura had left word that she would not eat at home. Caesar took an umbrella and went out into the street. The weather was very dark but it held off from rain.

Caesar took the Via Nazionale toward the centre of town. Among the crowd, some foreigners with red guide-books in their hands, were walking with long strides to see the sights of Rome, which the code of worldly snobbishness considers it indispensable to admire.

Caesar had no settled goal. On a plan of the city, hung in a newspaper kiosk, he found the situation of the Piazza Esedra, the hotel and the adjacent streets, and continued slowly ahead.

"How many people there must be who are excited and have an irregular pulse on arriving for the first time in one of these historic towns," thought Caesar. "I, for my part, was in that situation the first time I clearly understood the mechanism of the London Exchange."

Caesar continued down the Via Nazionale and stopped in a small square with a little garden and a palm. Bounding the square on one side arose a greenish wall, and above this wall, which was adorned with statues, stretched a high garden with magnificent trees, and among them a great stone pine.

"A beautiful garden to walk in," said Caesar. "Perhaps it is an historic spot, perhaps it isn't. I am very happy that I *don't know either its* name or its history, if it really has one."

From the same point in the Via Nazionale, a street with flights of steps could be seen to the left, and below a white stone column.

"Nothing doing; I don't know what that is either," thought Caesar; "the truth is that one is terribly ignorant. To make matters even, what a well of knowledge about questions of finance there is in my cranium!"

Caesar continued on to the Piazza Venezia, contemplated the palace of the Austrian Embassy, yellow, battlemented; and stopped under a big white umbrella, stuck up to protect the switchman of the tramway.

"Here, at least, the weight of tradition or history is not noticeable. I don't believe this canvas is a piece of Brutus's tunic, or of Pompey's campaign tent. I feel at home here; this canvas modernizes me."

The square was very animated at that moment: groups of seminarians were passing in robes of black, red, blue, violet, and sashes of contrasting colours; monks of all sorts were crossing, smooth-shaven, bearded, in black, white, brown; foreign priests were conversing in groups, wearing little dishevelled hats adorned with a tassel; horrible nuns with moustaches and black moles, and sweet little white nuns, with a coquettish air.

The clerical fauna was admirably represented. A Capuchin friar, long-bearded and dirty, with the air of a footpad, and an umbrella by way of a blunderbuss or musket under his arm, was talking to a Sister of Charity.

"Undoubtedly religion is a very picturesque thing," murmured Caesar. "A spectacular impressario would not have the imagination to think out all these costumes."

Caesar took the Corso. Before he reached the Piazza Colonna it began to rain. The coachmen took out enormous umbrellas, all rolled up, opened them and stood them in iron supports, in such a way that the box-seat was as it were under a campaign tent.

Caesar took refuge in the entrance to a bazaar. The rain began to assume the proportions of a downpour. An old friar, with a big beard, a white habit, and a hood, armed

with an untamable umbrella, attempted to cross the square. The umbrella turned inside out in the gusts of wind, and his beard seemed to be trying to get away from his face.

"*Povero frate!*" said one of the crowd, smiling.

A priest passed hidden under an umbrella. A tough among the refugees in the bazaar-doorway said that you couldn't tell if it was a woman or a priest, and the cleric, who no doubt heard the remark, threw a severe and threatening look at the group.

It stopped raining, and Caesar continued his walk along the Corso. He went a bit out of his way to throw a glance at the Piazza di Spagna. The great stairway in that square was shining, wet with the rain; a few seminarians in groups were going up the steps toward the Pincio.

Caesar arrived at the Piazza del Popolo and stopped near some ragamuffins who were playing a game, throwing coins in the air. A tattered urchin had written with charcoal on a wall: "*Viva Musolino!*" and below that he was drawing a heart pierced by two daggers.

"Very good," murmured Caesar. "This youngster is like me: an advocate of action!"

It began to rain again; Caesar decided to turn back. He took the same route and entered a café on the Corso for lunch. The afternoon turned out magnificent and Caesar went wandering about at random.

THE CICERONE

At twilight he returned to his inn, changed, and went to the salon. Laura was conversing with a young abbé.

"The Abbé Preciozi. . . . My brother Caesar."

The Abbé Preciozi was one of the household of Cardinal Fort, who had sent him to the hotel to act as cicerone to his nephew.

"Uncle has sent the abbé so that he can show you Rome."

"Oh, many thanks!" answered Caesar. "I will make use of his knowledge; but I don't want him to neglect his occupations *or to put himself* out on my account."

"No, no. I am at your disposition," replied the abbé, "His Eminence has given me orders to wait on you, and it will not put me out in the least."

"You will have dinner with us, Preciozi?" said Laura.

"Oh, Marchesa! Thank you so much!"

And the abbé bowed ceremoniously.

The three dined together, and afterwards went to the salon to chat. One of the San Martino young ladies played the viola and the other the piano, and people urged them to exhibit their skill.

The talkative Neapolitan turned over the pieces of music in the music-stand, and after discussing with the two *contessinas,* he placed on the rack the "Intermezzo" from *Cavalleria Rusticana.*

The two sisters played, and the listeners made great eulogies about their ability.

Laura presented Caesar and the Abbé Preciozi to the Countess Brenda and to a lady who had just arrived from Malta.

"Did you know Rome before?" the Countess asked Caesar in French.

"No."

"And how does it strike you?"

"My opinion is of no value," said Caesar. "I am not an artist. Imagine; my specialty is financial questions. Up to the present what has given me the greatest shock is to find that Rome has walls."

"You didn't know it?" asked Laura.

"No."

"Dear child, I find that you are very ignorant."

"What do you wish?" replied Caesar in Spanish. "I am inclined to be ignorant of everything I don't get anything out of."

Caesar spoke jokingly of a square like a hole in the ground, out of which rises a white column similar to the one in Paris in the Place Vendôme."

"What does he mean? Trajan's column?" asked Preciozi.

"It must be," said Laura. "I have a brother who's a barbarian. Weren't you in the Forum, too?"

"Which is the Forum? An open space where there are a lot of stones?"

"Yes."

"I passed by there; there were a good many tourists, crowds of young ladies peering intently into corners and a gentleman with a bag over his shoulder who was pointing out some columns with an umbrella. Afterwards I saw a ticket-window. 'That doubtless means that one pays to get in,' I said, and as the ground was covered with mud and I didn't care to wet my feet, I asked a young rascal who was selling post-cards what that place was. I didn't quite understand his explanation, which I am sure was very amusing. He confused Emperors with the Madonna and the saints. I gave the lad a lira and had some trouble in escaping from there, because he followed me around everywhere calling me Excellency."

"I think Don Caesar is making fun of us," said Preciozi.

"No, no."

"But really, how did Rome strike you, on the whole?" asked the abbé.

"Well, I find it like a mixture of a monumental great city and a provincial capital."

"That is possible," responded the abbé. "Undoubtedly the provincial city is more of a city than the big modern capitals, where there is nothing to see but fine hotels on one hand and horrible hovels on the other. If you came from America, like me, you would see how agreeable you would find the impression of a city that one gets here. To forget all the geometry, the streets laid out with a compass, the right angles. . . ."

"Probably so."

The abbé seemed to have an interest in gaining Caesar's friendship. Caesar said to him that, if he wished, they could go to his room to chat and smoke. The abbé accepted with gusto, and Caesar, being a suspicious person, wondered if the Cardinal *might have* sent the abbé to find out what sort of man

he was. Then he considered that his ideas must be of no importance whatsoever to his uncle; but on the chance, he set himself to throwing the abbé off the scent, talking volubly and emitting contradictory opinions about everything.

After chattering a long while and devoting himself to free paradox, Caesar thought that for the first session he had not done altogether badly. Preciozi took leave, promising to come back the next day.

"If he reports our conversation to my uncle, the man won't know what to think of me," reflected Caesar, on going to bed. "It would not be too much to expect, if His Eminence became interested and sent to fetch me. But I don't believe he will; my uncle cannot be intelligent enough to have the curiosity to know a man like me."

VI

THE LITTLE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE IN A ROMAN HOTEL

INTIMACIES

DURING some days the main interest of the people in the hotel was the growing intimacy established between the Marchesa Sciacca, who was the lady from Malta, and the Neapolitan with the Pulcinella air, Signor Carminatti.

The Maltese must have been haughty and exclusive, to judge from the queenly air she assumed. Only with the handsome Neapolitan did she behave amiably.

In the dining-room the Maltese sat with her two children, a boy and a girl, at the other end from where Caesar and Laura were accustomed to sit. At her side, at a table close by, chattered and jested the diplomatic Carminatti.

The Marquis of Sciacca was ill with diabetes; he had come to Rome to take a treatment, and during these days he did not come to the dining-room.

The Marchesa was one of those mixed types, unharmonious, common among mongrel races. Her black hair shone like jet, her lips looked like an Egyptian's, and her eyes of a very light blue showed off in a curious way in her bronzed face. She powdered her face, she painted her lips, she shaded her eyes with kohl. Her appearance was that of a proud, revengeful woman.

She ate with much nicety, opening her mouth so little that she could put no more than the tip of her spoon between her lips; with her children she talked English and Italian in equal perfection, and when she heard young Carminatti's facetious remarks she laughed with marked impudence.

Signor Carminatti was tall, with a black moustache, a hooked nose, well-formed languid eyes, lively and somewhat clownish gestures; he was at the same time sad and merry, melancholy and smiling, he changed his expression every moment. He was in the habit of appearing in the salon in a dinner-jacket, with a large flower in his button-hole and two or three fat diamonds on his chest. He would come along dragging his feet, would bow, make a joke, stand mournful; and this fluency of expression, and these gesticulations, gave him a manner halfway between woman and child.

When he grew petulant, especially, he seemed like a woman. "*Macché!*" he would say continually, with an acrid voice and the disgusted air of an hysterical dame.

In spite of his frequent petulant fits, he was the person most esteemed by the ladies of the hotel, both young and married.

"He is the darling of the ladies," the Countess Brenda said of him, mockingly.

Laura had not the least use for him.

"I know that type by heart," she asserted with disdain.

During lunch and dinner Signor Carminatti did not leave off talking for a moment with the Maltese. The Marchesa Sciacca's children often wanted to tell their mother something; but she hushed them so as to be able to hear the bright sayings of the handsome Neapolitan.

The San Martino young ladies and the Countess Brenda's daughter kept trying to find a way to steal Carminatti for their group; but he always went back to the Maltese, doubtless because her conversation was more diverting and spicy.

THE CONTESSINA BRENDA

The Countess Brenda's daughter, Beatrice Brenda, in spite of her pea-hen air, was always endeavouring to stir up the Neapolitan and to start a conversation with him; but Carminatti in his light-hearted way would reply with a jest or a fatuous remark and betake himself again to the Marchesa Sciacca, who would make her disturbing children hush be-

cause they often prevented her from catching what the Neapolitan was saying.

She was not to be despised, not by a long shot, was Signorina Bice, not in any respect; besides being very rich, she was a beautiful girl and promised to be more beautiful; she had the type of Titian's women, an opaline white skin, as though made of mother-of-pearl, plump milky arms, and dark eyes. The one thing lacking in her was expression.

She used frequently to go about in the company of an aristocratic old maid, very ugly, with red hair and a face like a horse, but very distinguished, who ate at the next table to Laura and Caesar.

One day Carminatti brought another Neapolitan home to dinner with him, a fat grotesque person, whom he instigated to emit a series of improprieties about women and matrimony. Hearing the scandalous sallies of the rustic, the ladies said, with an amiable smile:

"He is a *benedetto.*"

The Contessina Brenda, fascinated by the Neapolitan, went to the Marchesa Sciacca's table. As she passed, Carminatti arose with his napkin in one hand, and gesticulating with the other, said:

"Contessina. Allow me to present to you Signor Cappagutti, a merchant from Naples."

Signor Cappagutti remained leaning back tranquilly in his chair, and the Contessina burst out laughing and began to move her arms as if somebody had put a horse-fly on her skirt. Then she raised her hand to her face, to hide her laughter, and suddenly sat down.

DANCING

As it rained a great deal the majority of the guests preferred not to go out. In the evenings they had dances. Caesar did not appear at the first one; but his sister told him he ought to go. Caesar was at the second dance, so as not to seem too much of an ogre. As he had no intention of dancing, he

installed himself in a corner; and while the dance went on he kept talking with the Countesses Brenda and San Martino.

Various young men had arrived in the room. They exhibited that Southern vivacity which is a trifle tiresome to the onlooker, and they all listened to themselves while they spoke. The Neapolitan and two or three of his friends were introduced to Caesar; but they showed him a certain rather ostentatious and impertinent coolness.

Signor Carminatti exchanged a few words with the Countess Brenda, and purposely acted as if he did not notice Caesar's presence.

The Neapolitan's chatter did not irritate Caesar in the slightest, and as he had no intention of being his rival, he listened to him quite entertained.

Caesar noted that the San Martino ladies and some friends of theirs had a predilection for types like Carminatti, swarthy, prattling, and boastful South Italians.

The ladies showed an affectionate familiarity with the girls; they caressed them and kissed them effusively.

YOU ARE AN INQUISITOR

Laura, who was dancing with an officer, approached her brother, who was wedged into a corner, behind two rows of chairs.

"What are you doing here?" she asked him, stopping and informing her partner that she was going to sit down a moment.

"Nothing," answered Caesar, "I am waiting for this waltz to finish, so that I can get away."

"You are not enjoying yourself?"

"Pish!"

"Nevertheless, there are amusing things about it."

"Ah, surely. Do you know what happened to me with the Countess Brenda?"

"What did happen?"

"*When she* came in and gave me her hand, she said: 'How

hot your hands are; mine are frozen.' And she held my hands between hers. That was comical."

"Comical! Why?"

"How do I know?"

"It is comical to you, because you see only evil motives. She held your hand. Who knows what she may be after? Who knows if she wants to get something out of you? She has an income of eighty or ninety thousand lire, perhaps she wants to borrow money from you."

"No, I know she doesn't."

"Then, what are you afraid of?"

"Afraid! Afraid of nothing! Only it surprised me."

"That's because you look at everything with the eye of an inquisitor. One must be suspicious: be always on one's guard, always on the watch. It's the attitude of a savage."

"I don't deny it. I have no desire to be civilized like these people. But what does come to me is that the husband of our illustrious and wealthy friend wears in his breast that *porte-bonheur,* which I believe is called horns."

"Of course; and you haven't discovered that his family is a family of assassins? How Spanish! What a savage Spaniard I have for a brother!"

Caesar burst into laughter, and taking advantage of the moment when everybody was going to the buffet, left the room. In the corridor, one of the San Martino girls, the more sweet and angelic of the two, was in a corner with one of the dancers, and there was a sound like a kiss.

The little blonde made an exclamation of fright; Caesar behaved as if he had noticed nothing and kept on his way.

"The devil!" exclaimed Caesar, "that angelic little princess hides in corners with one of these *briganti.* And their mother has the face to say that they don't know how to bait a hook! I don't know what more she could wish. Although it is possible that this is the educational scheme of the future for marriageable girls."

In the entrance-hall of the hotel were the Marchesa *Sciacca's two children,* attended by a sleeping maid, the little

girl, seated on a sofa, was watching her brother, who walked from one side to the other with a roll of paper in his hand. In the entrance hall, opposite the hotel door, there was a bulletin, which was changed every day, to announce the different performances that were to be given that night at the theatres of Rome.

The small boy walked back and forth in front of the poster, and addressing himself to a public consisting of the sleeping maid and the little girl, cried:

"Step up, gentlemen! Step up! Now is the time. We are about to perform *La Geisha,* the magnificent English operetta. Walk right in! Walk right in!"

While the mother was dancing with the Neapolitan in the ball-room, the children were amusing themselves thus alone.

"The truth is that our civilization is an absurdity. Even the children go mad," thought Caesar, and took refuge in his room.

During the whole night he heard from his bed the notes of the waltzes and two-steps, and dancers' laughter and shouts and shuffling feet.

THEY ARE JUST CHILDREN

The next day, Laura, before going out to make a call, appeared at lunch-time most elegantly dressed, with a gown and a hat from Paris, in which she was truly most charming.

She had a great success: the San Martinos, the Countess Brenda, the other ladies congratulated her. The hat, above all, seemed ideal to them.

Carminatti was in raptures.

"*E bello, bellissimo,*" he said, with great enthusiasm, and all the ladies agreed that it was *bellissimo,* lengthening the "s" and nodding their heads with a gesture of admiration.

"And you don't say anything to me, *bambino?*" Laura inquired of Caesar.

"I say you are all right."

"*And nothing* more?"

"*If you* want me to pay you a compliment, I will tell you *that you* are pretty enough to make incest legitimate."

"What a barbarian!" murmured Laura, half laughing, half blushing.

"What has he been saying to you?" two or three people inquired.

Laura translated his words into Italian, and Carminatti found them admirable.

"Very appropriate! Very witty!" he exclaimed, laughing, and gave Caesar a friendly slap on the shoulder.

The Marchesa Sciacca looked at Laura several times with reflective glances and a rancorous smile.

"The truth is that these Southern people are just children," thought Caesar, mockingly. "What an inveterate preoccupation they have in the beautiful."

The Neapolitan was one of those most preoccupied with esthetics.

Caesar had a room opposite Signor Carminatti's, and the first few days he had thought it was a woman's room. Toilet flasks, sprays, boxes of powder; the room looked like a perfumery shop.

"It is curious," Caesar used to think, "how these people from famous historic towns can combine powder and the *maffia,* opoponax and daggers."

Almost every night after dinner there was an improvised dance in the salon. Somebody played the languorous waltzes of the Tzigane orchestras on the piano. The Maltese and Carminatti used to sing romantic songs, of the kind whose words and music seem to be always the same, and in which there invariably is question of panting, refulgent, love, and other suggestive words.

One Sunday evening, when it was raining, Caesar stayed in the hotel.

In the salon Carminatti was doing sleight-of-hand to entertain the ladies. Afterwards the Neapolitan was seen pursuing the Marchesa Sciacca and the two San Martino girls in the corridors. They shrieked shrilly when he grabbed them around the waist. The devil of a Neapolitan was an expert *at sleight-of-hand.*

VII

THE CONFIDENCES OF THE ABBE PRECIOZI

NATURAL VARIETIES OF NOSES AND EXPRESSIONS

CAESAR admitted before his conscience that he had n plans, or the slightest idea what direction to tak The Cardinal, no doubt, did not feel any desire t know him.

Caesar often proceeded by more or less absurd hypothese "Suppose," he would think, "that I had an idea, a concre ambition. In that case it would behoove me to be reserv on such and such topics and to hint these and those ideas people; let's do it that way, even though it be only for sport

Preciozi was the only person who was able to give him a light in his investigations, because the guests at the hotel, mo of them, on account of their position, thought of nothing b amusing themselves and of giving themselves airs.

Caesar discovered that Preciozi was ambitious; but besid lacking an opening, he had not the necessary vigour an imagination to do anything.

The abbé spoke a macaronic Spanish, which he had learne in South America, and which provoked Caesar's laughte He was constantly saying: "My friend," and he mingle Gallicisms with a lot of coarse expressions of Indian or mulat origin, and with Italian words. Preciozi's dialect was a gib berish worthy of Babel.

The first day they went out together, the abbé wanted t show him divers of Rome's picturesque spots. He led hi behind the Quirinal, through the Via della Panetteria and th Via del Lavatore, where there is a fruit-market, to the Tre *fountain.*

"It is beautiful, eh?" said the abbé.

"Yes; what I don't understand," replied Caesar, "is why, in a town where there is so much water, the hotel wash-basins are so small."

Preciozi shrugged his shoulders.

"What types you have in Rome!" Caesar went on. "What a variety of noses and expressions! Jesuits with the aspect of savants and plotters; Carmelites with the appearance of highway men; Dominicans, some with a sensual air, others with a professorial air. Astuteness, intrigue, brutality, intelligence, mystic stupor. . . . And as for priests, what a museum! Decorative priests, tall, with white shocks of hair and big cassocks; short priests, swarthy and greasy; noses thin as a knife; warty, fiery noses. Gross types; distinguished types; pale bloodless faces; red faces. . . . What a marvellous collection!"

Preciozi listened to Caesar's observations and wondered if the Cardinal's nephew might be a trifle off his head.

"Point out what is noteworthy, so that I may admire it enough," Caesar told him. "I don't care to burst out in an enthusiastic phrase for something of no value."

Preciozi laughed at these jokes, as if they were a child's bright sayings; but at times Caesar appeared to him to be an innocent soul, and at other times a Machiavellian who dissembled his insidious purposes under an extravagant demeanour.

When Preciozi was involved in some historic dissertation, Caesar used to ask him ingenuously:

"But listen, abbé; does this really interest you?"

Preciozi would admit that the past didn't matter much to him, and then with one accord, they would burst out laughing.

Caesar said that Preciozi and he were the most anti-historic men going about in Rome.

One morning they went to the Piazza del Campidoglio. It was drizzling; the wet roofs shone; the sky was grey.

"*This intrusion* of the country into Rome," said Caesar,

" is what gives the city its romantic aspect. These hills with trees on them are very pretty."

" Only pretty, Don Caesar? They are sublime," retorted Preciozi.

" What amazement I shall produce in you, my dear abbé, when I tell you that all my knowledge in respect to the Capitol reduces itself to the fact that some orator, I don't know who, said that near the Capitol is the Tarpeian Rock."

" You know nothing more about it? "

" Nothing more. I don't know if Cicero said that, or Castelar, or Sir Robert Peel."

Preciozi burst into merry laughter.

" What statue is that? " asked Caesar, indicating the one in the middle of the square.

" That is Marcus Aurelius."

" An Emperor? "

" Yes, an Emperor and a philosopher."

" And why have they made him riding such a little, pot-bellied horse? "

" I don't know, man."

" He looks like a man taking a horse to water at a trough. Why does he ride bare-back? Hadn't they invented stirrups at that period? "

Preciozi was a bit perplexed; before making a reply he gazed at the statue, and then said, confusedly:

" I think so."

They crossed the Piazza Campidoglio and went out by the left side of the Palazzo del Senatore. Down the Via dell' Arco di Severo, a street that runs down steps to the Forum, they saw a large arch that seemed sunk in the ground, and beyond, further away, another smaller arch with only one archway, which arose in the distance as if on top of the big arch. A square yellow tower, burned by the sun, lifted itself among the ruins; some hills showed rows of romantic cypresses, and in the background the blue Alban Mountains stood out *against a grey* sky.

" *Would you* like to go down to the Forum? " said the abbé.

"Down there where the stones are? No. What for?"

"Do you wish to see the Tarpeian Rock?"

"Yes, man. But explain to me what this rock was."

Preciozi got together all his information, which was not much.

They went by the Via Monte Tarpea, and came back by the Via della Consolazione.

"They must have thrown people who were already dead off the Tarpeian Rock," said Caesar, after hearing the explanation.

"No, no."

"But if they threw them down alive, the majority of those they chucked down here would not have died. At most they would have dislocated an arm, a leg, or a finger-joint. Unless they chucked them head first."

Preciozi could not permit the mortal effects of the Tarpeian Rock to be doubted, and he said that its height had been lessened and the level of the soil had risen.

After these explanations Caesar found the spot of Roman executions somewhat less fantastic.

"How would you like to go to that church in the Forum?" said Preciozi.

"I was going to propose that we should go to the hotel; it must be lunch-time."

"Come along."

THE CHURCH AND COOKING

Caesar had Marsala and Asti brought for the abbé, who was a gourmet.

While Preciozi ate and drank with all his jaws, Caesar devoted himself to teasing him. The waiter had brought some cream-puffs and informed them that that was a dish every one ate that day. Laura and Preciozi praised the puffs, and Caesar said:

"What an admirable religion ours is! For each day the church has a saint and a special dish. The truth is that the *Catholic Church* is very wise; it has broken all relations with

science, but it remains in harmony with cooking. As Preciozi was a moment ago saying with great exactitude, this close relation that exists between the Church and the kitchen is moving."

"I said that to you?" asked Preciozi. "What a falsehood!"

"Don't pay any attention," said Laura.

"Yes, my dear abbé," retorted Caesar, "and I even believe that you added confidentially that sometimes the Pope in the Vatican gardens, imitating Francis I after the battle of Pavia, is wont to say sadly to the Secretary of State: 'All is lost, save faith and . . . good cooking.'"

"What a *bufone!* What a *bufone!*" exclaimed Preciozi, with his mouth full.

"You are giving a proof of irreligion which is in bad taste," said Laura. "Only janitors talk like that."

"On such questions I am an honourary janitor."

"That's all right, but you ought to realize that there are religious people here, like the abbé. . . ."

"Preciozi? Why, he's a Voltairean."

"Oh! Oh! My friend, . . ." exclaimed Preciozi, emptying a glass of wine.

"Voltaireanism," continued Caesar. "There is nobody here who has faith, nobody who makes the little sacrifice of not eating on Fridays in Lent. Here we are, destroying with our own teeth one of the most beautiful works of the Church. You will both ask me what that work is. . . ."

"No, we will not ask you anything," said Laura, waving a hand in the air.

"Well, it is that admirable alimentary harmony sustained by the Church. During the whole year we are authorized to eat terrestrial animals, and in Lent aquatic ones only. Promiscuous as we are, we are undoing the equilibrium between the maritime and the land forces, we are attacking the peaceful rotation of meat and fish."

"He is a child," said Preciozi, "we must leave him alone."

"Yes, but that will not impede my Spaniard's heart, my

Cardinal's nephew's heart from bleeding grievously . . . Shall we go to the café, Abbé? "

" Yes, let us go."

THE MARVELLOUS BIRD OF ROME

They left the hotel and entered a café in the Piazza Esedra. Preciozi made a vague move to pay, but Caesar would not permit him to.

" What do you wish to do? " said the abbé.

" Whatever you like."

" I have to go to the Altemps palace a moment."

" To see my uncle? "

" Yes; then, if you feel like it, we can take a long walk."

" Very good."

They went towards the centre of the town by the Via Nazionale. It was a splendid sunny afternoon.

Preciozi went into the Altemps palace a moment; Caesar waited for him in the street. Then, together they went over to opposite the Castel Sant' Angelo, crossed the river, and approached the Piazza di San Pietro. The atmosphere was wonderfully clear and pure; the suave blue sky seemed to caress the pinnacles and decorations of the big square.

Preciozi met a dirty friar, dark, with a black beard and a mouth from ear to ear. The abbé showed no great desire to stop and speak with him, but the other detained him. This party wore a habit of a brown colour and carried a big umbrella under his arm.

" There's a type! " said Caesar, when Preciozi rejoined him.

" Yes, he is a peasant," the abbé said with disgust.

" If that chap meets any one in the road, he plants his umbrella in his chest, and demands his money or his . . . eternal life."

" Yes, he is a disagreeable man," agreed Preciozi.

They continued their walk, through the Piazza Cavallegeri and outside the walls. As they went up one of the hills there, they could see the façade of Saint Peter's continually nearer, *with all the huge stone* figures on the cornice.

"The fact is that that poor Christ plays a sad rôle there in the middle," said Caesar.

"Oh! Oh! My friend," exclaimed the abbé in protest.

"A plebeian Jew in the midst of so many princes of the Church! Doesn't it strike you as an absurdity?"

"No, not absurd at all."

"The truth is that this religion of yours is Jewish meat with a Roman sauce."

"And yours? What is yours?"

"Mine? I have not got past fetichism. I worship the golden calf. Like the majority of Catholics."

"I don't believe it."

They looked back; they could see the dome of the great basilica shining in the sun; then, to one side, a little viaduct and a tower.

"What a wonderful bird you keep in this beautiful cage!" said Caesar.

"What bird?" asked Preciozi.

"The Pope, friend Preciozi, the Pope. Not the popinjay, but the Pope in white. What a very marvellous bird! He has a feather fan like a peacock's tail; he speaks like the cockatoo, only he differs from them in being infallible; and he is infallible, because another bird, also marvellous, which is called the Holy Ghost, tells him by night everything that takes place on earth and in heaven. What very picturesque and extravagant things!"

"For you who have no faith everything must be extravagant."

Caesar and Preciozi went on encircling the walls and reading the various marble tablets set into them, and ascended to the Janiculum, to the terrace where Garibaldi's statue stands.

POOR TINDARO

"But, are you anti-Catholic, seriously?" asked Preciozi.

"*But do you* believe any one can be a Catholic seriously?" *said Caesar.*

"I can, yes; otherwise I shouldn't be a priest."

"But are you a priest because you believe, or do you make believe that you believe because you are a priest?"

"You are a child. I suppose you hate the Jesuits, like all Liberals."

"And I suppose you hate Masons, like all Catholics."

"No."

"No more do I hate Jesuits. What is worse, I read the life of Saint Ignatius Loyola at school, and he seemed to me a great man."

"Well, I should think so!"

"And the Jesuits have some power still?"

"Yes."

"Really?"

"Yes, man. They give the Church its direction. Oh, nobody fools the Society. You can see what happened to Cardinal Tindaro."

"I don't know what did happen to him," said Caesar, with indifference.

"No?"

"No."

"Well, Cardinal Tindaro decided to follow the inspirations of the Society and made many Jesuits Cardinals with the object that when Pope Leo XIII died, they should elect him Pope; but the Jesuits smelled the rat, and when Leo XIII got very ill, the Council of Assistants of the Society had a meeting and decided that Tindaro should not be Pope, and ordered the Austrian Court to oppose its veto. When the election came, the Jesuit Cardinals gave Tindaro a fat vote, out of gratitude, but calculated not to be enough to raise him to the throne, and in case it was, the Austrian Cardinal and the Hungarian had their Empire's veto to Tindaro's election in their pocket."

"And this Tindaro, is he intelligent?"

"Yes, he is indeed; very intelligent. Style Leo XIII."

"Men of weight."

"*Yes, but neither* of the two had Pius IX's spirit."

"And the present one? He is a poor creature, eh?"

"I don't know, I don't know. . . ."

"And the Society of Jesus, is it on good terms with this Pope?"

"Surely. He is their creation."

"So that the Society is really powerful?"

"It certainly is! Without a doubt! It has a pleasant rule, and obedience, and knowledge, and money. . . ."

"It has money too, eh?"

"Has it money? More than enough."

"And in what form? In paper?"

"In paper, and in property, and industries; in steamship companies, in manufactories. . . ."

"I would make an admirable business manager."

"Well, your uncle, the Cardinal, could get you put in touch with the Society."

"Is he a friend of theirs?"

"Close as a finger-nail."

Caesar was silent a moment, and then said:

"And I have heard that the Society of Jesus was, at bottom, an anti-Christian organization, a branch of Masonry. . . ."

"*Macché!*" exclaimed the abbé. "How could you believe that? Oh, no, my friend! What an absurdity!"

Then, seeing Caesar burst into laughter, he calmed himself, wondering if he was making fun of him.

They went down the hill, where the monument to Garibaldi flaunts itself, to the terrace of the Spanish Academy.

The view was magnificent; the evening, now falling, was clear; the sky limpid and transparent. From that height the houses of Rome were spread out silent, with an air of solemnity, of immobility, of calm. It appeared a flat town; one did not notice its slopes and its hills; it gave the impression of a city in stone set under a glass globe.

The sky itself, pure and diaphanous, augmented the sensation of withdrawal and quietude; not a cloud on the horizon, not a spot of smoke in the air; silence and repose everywhere.

The dome of St. Peter's had the colour of a cloud, the shrubberies on the Pincio were reddened by the sun, and the Alban Hills disclosed the little white towns and the smiling villas on their declivities.

Preciozi pointed out domes and towers; Caesar did not hear him, and he was thinking, with a certain terror:

"We shall die, and these stones will continue to shine in the sunlight of other winter evenings."

THE VATICAN FAMILY

Making an effort with himself, he threw off this painful idea, and turning to Preciozi, asked:

"So you believe that I might have made a nice career in the Church?"

"You! I certainly do think so!" exclaimed Preciozi. "With a cardinal for uncle, *che carriera* you could have made!"

"But are there enough different jobs in the Church?"

"From the Pope to the canons and the Papal Guards, you ought to see all the hierarchies we have at the Vatican. First the Pope, then the Cardinals in bishop's orders, next, the Cardinals in priest's orders, then the Cardinal's in deacon's orders, the Secretaries, the *compisteria* of the Holy College of Cardinals, the Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, and the Pontifical Family."

"Whose family is that? The Pope's?"

"No; it is called that, as who should say, the General Staff of the Vatican. It is made up of the Palatine Cardinals, the Palatine Prelates, the Participating Privy Chamberlains, the Archbishops and Bishops assisting the Pontifical throne, the Domestic Prelates, who form the College of Apostolic Prothonotaries, the Pontifical Masters of Ceremonies, the Princes Assisting the Throne, the Privy Participating Cape-and-Sword Chamberlains, the Privy Numbered Cape-and-Sword Chamberlains. . . ."

"*Cape-and-Sword!* Didn't I tell you that that poor Christ

plays a sorry part on the façade of Saint Peter's?" exclaimed Caesar.

"Why, man?"

"Because all this stuff about capes and swords doesn't seem very fitting for the soul of a Christian. Unless, of course, the knights of the sword and cape do not use the sword to wound and the cape for a shield, but only wield the sword of Faith and the cape of Charity. . . . And haven't you any gentlemen of Bed-and-Board, as they have at the Spanish Court?"

"No."

"That's a pity. It is so expressive, . . . bed and board. Bed and board, cape and sword. Who wouldn't be satisfied? One must admit that there is nobody equal to the Church, and next to her a monarchy, when it comes to inventing pretty things. That is why it is said, and very well said, that there is no salvation outside of the Church."

"You are a pagan."

"And I believe you are one, too."

"*Macché!*"

"What comes after all those Privy Cape-and-Sword Chamberlains, my dear Abbé?"

"Next, there is the Pontifical Noble Guard, the Swiss Papal Guard, the Palatine Guard of Honour, the Corps of Papal Gendarmes, the Privy Chaplains, the Privy Clerics, the suite of His Holiness. Next come the members of the Palatine Administration, the Congregations, and more Secretaries."

"And do the Cardinals live well?"

"Yes."

"How much do they make?"

"They get twenty thousand lire fixed salary, besides extras."

"But that is very little!"

"Certainly! It used to be much more, at the time of the Papal States. Out of their twenty thousand lire they have to keep a carriage."

"Those that aren't rich must have a hard time."

"*Just imagine*, some of them have to live in a third-floor

apartment. There have been some that bought their red robes second-hand."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Are those robes so expensive?"

"Yes, they are expensive. Quite. They are made of a special cloth manufactured in Cologne."

"Are there many Cardinals who are not of rich families?"

"A great many."

"Well, you people have ruined that job."

They went to Trastevere and there they took the tram. Preciozi got out at the Piazza Venezia and Caesar went on to the end of the Via Nazionale.

A TALK ABOUT MONEY

"Where have you been?" asked Laura, on seeing him.

"I've been taking a walk with the abbé."

"It's evident that you find him more interesting than us women."

"Preciozi is very interesting. He is a Machiavellian. He has a candour that is assumed and a dulness that is assumed. He plays a little comedy to get out of paying, at the café or in the tram. He is splendid. I think, if you will pardon me for saying so, that the Italians are damned close."

"People that have no money are forced to be economical."

"No, that isn't so. I have known people in Madrid who made three pesetas a day, and spent two treating a friend."

"Yes, out of ostentation, out of a desire to show off. I don't like pretentious people."

"Well, I believe I prefer them to skinflints."

"Yes, that's very Spanish. A man wasting money, while his wife and children are dying of hunger. . . . The man who won't learn the value of money is not the best type."

"Money is filthy. If it were only possible to abolish it!"

"For my part, son, I should like less to have it abolished *than to have a great* deal of it."

"I shouldn't. If I could carry out my plans, all I should need afterwards would be a hut to live in, a garret."

"Our ideas differ."

"These people that need clothes and jewels and perfumes fairly nauseate me. . . . All such things are only fit for Jews."

"Then I must surely be a Jewess."

VIII

OLD PALACES, OLD SALONS, OLD LADIES

THE CARDINAL UNCLE

AS the Cardinal gave no indication of curiosity to see Caesar, Caesar several times said to Laura:

"We ought to call on uncle, eh?"

"Do as you choose. He isn't very anxious to see you. Apparently he takes you for an unbeliever."

"All right, that has nothing to do with calling on him."

"If you like I will go with you."

The Cardinal lived in the Palazzo Altemps. That palace is situated in the Via di S. Apollinare, opposite a seminary. The brother and sister proceeded to the palace one morning, went up the grand staircase, and in a reception-room they found Preciozi with two other priests, talking together in low tones.

One was a worn, pallid old man, with his nose and the borders of his nasal appendage extremely red. Caesar considered that so red a nose in that livid, ghastly face resembled a lantern in a melancholy landscape lighted by the evening twilight. This livid person was the house librarian.

"His Eminence is very busy," said Preciozi, after bowing to the callers. He spoke with a different voice from the one he used outside. "I will go in, in a moment, and see if you can see him."

Caesar stepped to the window of the reception-room: one could see the court of the old palace and the colonnade surrounding it.

"This house must be very large," he said.

"*You shall see it later, if you like,*" replied the abbé.

A little after this Preciozi disappeared, and reappeared again in the opening of a glass door, saying, in the discreetly lowered voice which was no doubt that of his domestic functions:

"This way, this way."

They went into a large, cold, shabby room. Through an open door they could see another bare salon, equally dark and sombre.

The Cardinal was seated at a table; he was dressed as a monk and had the air of being in a bad humour. Laura went promptly to him and kissed his hand. Caesar bowed, and as the Cardinal did not deign to look at him, remained standing at some distance from the table.

Laura, after having saluted her uncle as a pillar of the Church, talked to him as a relative. The Cardinal cast a rapid glance at Caesar, and then, scowling somewhat less, asked him if his mother was well and if he expected to be long in Rome.

Caesar, vexed by this frigid reception, answered shortly in a few cold words, that all of them were well.

The Cardinal's secretary, who was by the window assisting at the interview, shot angry looks at Caesar.

After a brief audience, which could not have lasted over five minutes, the Cardinal said, addressing Laura:

"Pardon me, my daughter, but I must go on with my work"; and immediately, without a look at his nephew or his niece he called the secretary, who brought him a portfolio of papers.

Caesar opened the glass door for Laura to pass.

"Would you like to see the palace?" Preciozi asked them. "There are some antique statues, magnificent marbles, and a chapel where Saint Aniceto's body is preserved."

"Let's leave Saint Aniceto's body for another day," Caesar replied sardonically.

Laura and Caesar went down the stairway.

"There was no need to come, to behave like that," she said, upset.

"*How so?*"

"*How so!* You behaved like a savage, no more nor less."

"No, he was the one that behaved like a savage. I bowed to him, and he wasn't willing even to look at me."

"You made up for it by staring at him as if he had been some curious insect in a cage."

"It was his fault for not being even barely polite to me."

"Do you think that a Cardinal is an ordinary person to whom you say: 'Hello! How are you? How's business?'"

"I met an English Cabinet Minister in a club once and he was like anybody else."

"It's not the same thing."

"Do you believe that perhaps our uncle considers that he fulfils a providential mission, a divine mission?"

"What a question! Of course he does."

"Then he is a poor idiot. However, it's nothing to me. Our uncle is a stupid fool."

"You discovered that in such a little while?"

"Yes. Fanatical, vain, fatuous, pleased with himself. . . . He is of no use to me."

"Ah, so you thought he would be of some use to you?"

"Why not?"

Her brother's arbitrary manner of taking things irritated and at the same time amused Laura.

She believed that he made it a rule to persist in always doing the contrary to other people.

Laura and her friends of both sexes used to run across one another in museums, out walking in the popular promenades, and at the races. Caesar didn't go to museums, because he said he had no artistic feeling; races didn't interest him either; and when it came to walking, he preferred to wander at random in the streets.

As his memory was not full of historical facts, he experienced no great esthetic or archeological thrills, and no sympathy whatsoever with the various herds of tourists that went about examining old stones.

At night, in the salon, he used to give burlesque descriptions, in his laconic French, of street scenes: the Italian *soldiers with cock-feathers* drooping from a sort of bowler

hat, the porters of the Embassies and great houses, with their cocked hats, their blue great-coats, and the staff with a silver knob in their hands.

The precise, jocose, biting report of his observations offended Laura and her lady friends.

"Why do you hate Italians so much?" the Countess Brenda asked him one day.

"But I don't hate them."

"He speaks equally badly of everybody," explained Laura. "He has a bad character."

"Is it because you have had an unhappy life?" the Countess asked, interested.

"No, I don't think so," said Caesar, feeling like smiling; instead of which, and without knowing why and without any reason, he put on a sad look.

EXERCISES IN HYPOCRISY

Laura, with her feminine perspicacity, noted that from that day on the Countess looked at Caesar a great deal and with melancholy smiles; and not only the mother appeared interested, but the daughter too.

"I don't know what it is in my brother," thought Laura; "women are attracted to him just because he pays no attention to them. And he knows it; yes, indeed he does, even thought he acts as if he were unconscious of it. Both mother and daughter taken with him! Carminatti has been routed."

The Countess quickly discovered a great liking for Laura, and as they both had friends in good Roman society, they made calls together. Laura was astonished enough to hear Caesar say that if there was no objection, he would go with them.

"But the majority of our friends are old ladies, devout old ladies."

"All the better."

"*All right.* But if you come, it is on condition that you say *nothing that* would shock them."

"Surely."

Caesar accompanied the Countess Brenda and his sister to various aristocratic houses, and at every one he heard the same conversation, about the King, the Pope, the Cardinals, and how few or how many people there were in the hotels. These topics, together with slanders, constituted the favourite motive for conversation in the great world.

Caesar conversed with the somewhat flaccid old ladies ("*castanae molles,*" as Preciozi called them) with perfect hypocrisy; he regarded the classic decorations of the salons, and while he listened to rather strange French and to most elegant and pure Italian, he wondered if there might be somebody among all this Papal society whom he could use to forward his ambitions.

Sometimes among the guests he would meet a young "monsignor," discreetly smiling, whose emerald ring it was necessary to kiss. Caesar would kiss it and say to himself: "Let us practise tolerance with our lips."

In many of these salons the mania for the English game called "bridge" had caught with great violence.

Caesar hated card-games. For a man who made a study of the stock-exchange, the mechanism of a card-game was too stupid to arouse any interest. But he had no objection to playing and losing.

The Countesses Brenda and San Martino had "bridge-mania" very hard, and they used to go to Brenda's room in the evening to play.

After playing bridge a week, Caesar found that his money was insensibly melting away.

"Look here," he said to Laura.

"What is it?"

"You have got to teach me bridge."

"I don't know how to play, because I have no head for such things and I forget what cards have been played; but they gave me a little book on the game. I will lend it to you, if you like."

"Yes, give me it."

Caesar read the book, learned the intricacies of the game,

and the next few evenings he acquitted himself so well tha the Countess of San Martino marched off to her room witl burning cheeks and almost in tears.

"What a cad you are!" Laura said to him at lunch som days later, laughing. "You are fleecing those women."

"It's their own fault. Why did they take advantage o my innocence?"

"They have decided to go and play in Carminatti's roon without telling you."

"I'm glad of it."

"Do you know, *bambino,* I have to go away for a few days.

"Where?"

"To Naples. Come with me."

"No; I have things to do here. I will take you to th station."

"Ah, you rascal! You are a Don Juan."

"No, dear sister. I am a financier."

"I can see your victims from here. But I shall put ther on their guard. You are a blood-thirsty hyena. You like t collect hearts the way the Red-skins did scalps."

"You mean coupons."

"No, hearts. You like to pretend to be simple, becaus you are wicked. I will tell the Countess Brenda and he daughter."

"What are you going to tell them?"

"That you are wicked, that you have a hyena's heart, tha you want to ruin them."

"Don't tell them that, because it will make them fall in lov with me. A hyena-hearted man is always run after by th ladies."

"You are right. Come along, go to Naples with me."

"Is your husband such a terrible bore, little sister?"

"A little more cream and a little less impertinenc *bambino,*" said Laura, holding out her plate with a comi gesture.

Caesar burst out laughing, and after lunch he took Laur *to the station* and remained in Rome alone.

His two chief occupations consisted in making love respectfully to the Countess Brenda and going to walk with Preciozi.

The Countess Brenda was manifestly coming around; in the evening Caesar would take a seat beside her and start a serious conversation about religious and philosophical matters. The Countess was a well-educated and religious woman; but beneath all her culture one could see the ardent dark woman, still young, and with intense eyes.

Caesar made it a spiritual training to talk to the Countess. She often turned the conversation to questions of love, and discussed them with apparent keenness and insight, but it was evident that all her ideas about love came out of novels. Beyond a doubt, her calm, vulgar husband did not fill up the emptiness of her soul, because the Countess was discontented and had a vague hope that somewhere, above or beneath the commonplaces of the day, there was a mysterious region where the ineffable reigned.

Caesar, who hadn't much faith in the ineffable, used to listen to her with a certain amazement, as if the plump, strong woman had been a visionary incapable of understanding reality.

In the daytime Caesar went walking with Preciozi and they talked of their respective plans.

SOLITARY WALKS

Often Caesar went out alone, chewing the end of his thoughts as he strolled in the streets, working out possible schemes of investments or of politics.

When he got away from the main streets, he kept finding some corner at every step that left him astonished at its fantastic, theatrical air. Suddenly he would discover himself before a high wall, on top of which were statues covered with moss, or huge terra-cotta jars. Those decorations would stand out against the dark foliage of the Roman ilex and the tall, black cypresses. At the end of a street would rise a tall

palm, drooping its branches over a little square, or a stone pine, like the one in the Aldobrandini garden.

"These people were real artists," Caesar would murmur, and mean it as a fact, not taking it for either praise or blame.

His curiosity got excited, despite his determination not to resemble a tourist in any way. The low windows of a palace would let him see lofty ceilings with great stretches of painting, or decorated with medallions and legends; a balcony would display a thick curtain of ivy that hid the railings; here he would read a Latin inscription cut in a marble tablet, there he would come upon a black lane between two old houses, with a battered lantern at its entrance. In the part of town between the Corso and the Tiber, which is full of narrow, crooked old streets, he loved to wander until he was lost.

Some details already familiar, he was delighted to see again; he always halted to look down the Via della Pillotta, with its arches over the street; and the little flower-market in the Piazza di Spagna always gave him a sensation of joy.

At dusk Caesar would walk in the centre of town; the bars filled up with people who loved to take cakes and sweet wine; on the sidewalks the itinerant merchants cried their trifling wares; along the Corso a procession of carriages full of tourists passed rapidly, and a few well-appointed victorias came driving back from the Pincio and the Villa Borghese.

Once in a while Caesar went out in the evening after dinner. There was scant animation in the streets, theatres didn't interest him, and he would soon return to the hotel salon to chat with the Countess Brenda.

Later, in his room, he would write to Alzugaray, giving him his impressions.

IX

NEW ACQUAINTANCES

"I PROTESTANTI DELLA SIMPATIA"

IT began again to rain disastrously; the days were made up of downpours and squalls, to the great despair of the foreigners.

At night the Piazza Esedra was a fine sight from the hotel balcony. The arc lights reflected their glow in the lakes of rain beneath them, and the great jet of the fountain in the centre took on tones of blue and mother-of-pearl, where the rays of the electric light pierced through it.

In the hotel parlour one dance followed another. Everybody complained gaily of the bad weather.

Shortly before the middle of Lent there arrived a Parisian family at the hotel, composed of a mother with two daughters and a companion.

This family might be considered a representation of the *entente cordiale.* The mother was French, the widow first of a Spaniard, Señor Sandoval, by whom she had had one daughter, and then of an Englishman, Mr. Dawson, by whom she had had another.

Mme. Dawson was a fat, imposing lady, with tremendous brilliants in her ears and somewhat theatrical clothes; Mlle. Sandoval, the elder daughter, was of Arab type, with black eyes, an aquiline nose, pale rose-coloured lips, and a malicious smile, full of mystery, as if it revealed restless and diabolical intentions.

Her half-sister, Mlle. Dawson, was a contrast, being the perfect type of a grotesque Englishwoman, with a skin like a beet, and freckles.

The governess, Mlle. Cadet, was not at all pretty, but she was gay and sprightly.

These four women seated in the middle of the dining-room, a little stiff, a little out of temper, seemed, particularly the first few days, to defy anybody that might have wished to approach them. They replied coolly to the formal bows of the other guests, and none of them cared to take part in the dances.

The handsome Signor Carminatti shot incendiary glances at Mlle. de Sandoval; but she remained scornful; so one evening, as the Dawson family came out of the dining-room, the Neapolitan waved his hand toward them and said:

"*I protestanti della simpatia.*"

Caesar made much of this phrase, because it was apt, and he took it that Carminatti considered the ladies protestants against friendliness, because they had paid no attention to the charms that he displayed in their honour.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE RAIN

Two or three days later Mme. Dawson bowed to Caesar on passing him in the hall, and asked him:

"Aren't you Spanish?"

"Yes, madam."

"But don't you speak French?"

"Very little."

"My daughter is Spanish too."

"She is a perfect Spanish type."

"Really?" asked the daughter referred to.

"Thoroughly."

"Then I am happy."

In the evening, after dinner, Caesar again joined Mme. Dawson and began to talk with her. The Frenchwoman had a tendency to philosophize, to criticize, and to find out everything. She had no great capacity for admiration, and nothing she saw suceeded in dragging warm eulogies from her lips. There was none of the "*bello! bellissimo!*" of the Italian ladies in her talk, but a series of exact epithets.

Mme. Dawson had left all her capacity for admiration in France, and was visiting Italy for the purpose of arriving as

soon as possible at the conclusion that there is no town like Paris, no nation like the French, and it didn't matter much to Caesar whether he agreed or denied it.

Mlle. de Sandoval had a great curiosity about things in Spain and an absurd idea about everything Spanish.

"It seems impossible," thought Caesar, "how stupid French people are about whatsoever is not French."

Mlle. de Sandoval asked Caesar a lot of questions, and finally, with an ironic gesture, said to him:

"You mustn't let us keep you from going to talk with the Countess Brenda. She is looking over at you a great deal."

Caesar became a trifle dubious; indeed, the Countess was looking at him in a fixed and disdainful way.

"The Countess is a very intelligent woman," said Caesar; "I think you would all like her very much."

Mme. Dawson said nothing; Caesar rose, took his leave of the family, and went over to speak to the Countess and her daughter. She received him coldly. Caesar thought he would stay long enough to be polite and then get away, when Carminatti, speaking to him in a very friendly way and calling him "*mio caro*," asked him to introduce him to Mme. Dawson.

He did so, and when he had left the handsome Neapolitan leaning back in a chair beside the French ladies, he made the excuse that he had a letter to write, and said good-night.

"I see that you are an ogre," said Mlle. de Sandoval.

"Do you want me for anything?"

"No, no; you may go when you choose."

Caesar repaired to his room.

"I don't mind those people," he said; "but if they think I am a man made for entertaining ladies, they are very clever."

The next day Mme. Dawson talked with Caesar very affably, and Mlle. de Sandoval made a few ironical remarks about his savage ways.

Of all the family Caesar conceived that Mlle. Cadet was the most intelligent.

She was a French country girl, very jovial, blond, with a turned-up nose, and on the whole insignificant looking. When she spoke, her voice had certain falsetto inflexions that were very comical.

Mlle. Cadet was on to everything the moment it happened. Caesar asked her jokingly about the people in the hotel, and he was thunderstruck to find that she had discovered in three or four days who all the guests were and where they came from.

Mlle. Cadet also told him that Carminatti had sent an ardent declaration of love to the Sandoval girl the first day he saw her.

"The devil!" exclaimed Caesar. "What an inflammable Neapolitan it is! And what did she reply?"

"What would she reply? Nothing."

"As you are already familiar with everything going on here," said Caesar, "I am going to ask you a question: what is the noise in the court every night? I am always thinking of asking somebody."

"Why, it is charging the accumulator of the lift," replied Mlle. Cadet.

"You have relieved me from a terrible doubt which worried me."

"I have never heard a noise," said Mlle. de Sandoval, breaking into the conversation.

"That's because your room is on the square," Caesar answered, "and the noise is in the court; on the poor side of the house.

"Pshaw! There is no reason to complain," remarked Mlle. Cadet, "if they give us a serenade."

"Do you consider yourself poor?" Mlle. de Sandoval asked Caesar, disdainfully.

"Yes, I consider myself poor, because I am."

During the following days Mme. Dawson and her daughters were introduced to the rest of the people in the hotel, and became intimate with them. The "Contessina" Brenda and the *San Martino girls* made friends with the French girls, and the

Neapolitan and his gentlemen friends flitted among them all.

The Countess Brenda at first behaved somewhat stiff with Mme. Dawson and her daughters, but later she little by little submitted and permitted them to be her friends.

She introduced the French ladies to the other ladies in the hotel; but doubtless her aristocratic ideas would not allow her to consider Mlle. Cadet a person worthy to be introduced, for whenever she got to her she acted as if she didn't know her.

The governess, noticing this repeated contempt, would blush at it, and once she murmured, addressing Caesar with tears ready to escape from her eyes:

"That's a nice thing to do! Just because I am poor, I don't think they ought to despise me."

"Don't pay any attention," said Caesar, quite aloud; "these middle-class people are often very rude."

Mlle. de Sandoval gave Caesar a look half startled and half reproving; and he explained, smiling:

"I was telling Mlle. Cadet a funny story."

Mme. Dawson and her daughters soon became friends with the most distinguished persons in the hotel; only the Marchesa Sciacca, the Maltese, avoided them as if they inspired her with profound contempt.

In a few days the Countess Brenda and Caesar's friendship passed beyond the bonds of friendship; but in the course of time it cooled off again.

INFLUENCE OF THE INCLINATION OF THE EARTH'S AXIS ON WHAT IS CALLED LOVE

One evening, when the Countess Brenda's daughter had left Rome to go with her father to a villa they owned in the North, the Countess and Caesar had a long conversation in the salon. They were alone; a great tenor was singing at the Costanzi, and the whole hotel was at the theatre. The Countess chatted with Caesar, she reclining in a *chaise longue,* and he seated in a low chair.

That evening the Countess was feeling in a provocative humour, and she made fun of Caesar's mode of life and his ideas, not with the phrases and the manners of a great lady, but with the boldness and spice of a woman of the people.

The angle that the earth's axis makes with the trajectory of the ecliptic, and which produces those absurd phenomena that we Spaniards call seasons, determined at that period the arrival of spring, and spring had no doubt shaken the Countess Brenda's nerves.

Spring gave cooling inflexions to the lady's voice and made her express herself with warmth and with a shamelessly libertine air.

No doubt the core of her personality was joyful, provoking, and somewhat licentious.

Her eyes flashed, and on her lips there was a sensual expression of challenge and mockery.

Caesar, that evening, without knowing why, was dull at expressing himself, and depressed. Some of the Countess's questions left him in a stupid unreadiness.

"Poor child; I am sorry for you," she suddenly said.

"Why?"

"Because you are so weak; you have such an air of exhaustion. What do you do to make you like this? I am sure you ought to be given some sort of iron tonic, like the anaemic girls."

"Do you really think I am so weak?" asked Caesar.

"Isn't it written all over you?"

"Well, anyway, I am stronger than you, Countess."

"In a discussion, perhaps. But otherwise. . . . You have no strength except in your brains."

"And in my hands. Give me your hand."

The Countess gave him her hand and Caesar pressed it tighter and tighter.

"You are strong after all," she said.

"That is nothing. You wait," and Caesar squeezed the Countess's hand until he made her give a sharp scream. A *servant entered the* salon.

"It's nothing," said the Countess, getting up; "I seemed to have turned my foot."

"I will take you to your room," exclaimed Caesar, offering her his arm.

"No, no. Thanks very much."

"Yes. It has to be."

"Then, all right," she murmured, and added, "Now you frighten me."

"Bah, you will get over that!" and Caesar went into her room with her. . . .

The next day Caesar appeared in the salon looking as if he had been buried and dug up.

"What is the matter?" Mme. Dawson and her daughters asked him.

"Nothing; only I had a headache and I took a big dose of antipyrine."

The relations of the Brenda lady and Caesar soon cooled. Their temperaments were incompatible: there was no harmony between their imaginations or between their skins. In reality, the Countess, with all her romanticism, did not care for long and compromising liaisons, but for hotel adventures, which leave neither vivid memories nor deep imprints. Caesar noted that despite her lyricism and her sentimental talk, there was a great deal of firmness in this plump woman, and a lack of sensitiveness.

Moreover, this woman, so little aristocratic in intimacy, had much vanity about stupid things and a great passion for jewelry; but what contributed most to making Caesar feel a profound hatred for her was his discovering what good health she enjoyed. This good health seemed offensive to Caesar, above all when he compared it to his own, to his weak nerves and his restless brain.

From considering her a spiritual and delicate lady he passed to considering her a powerful mare, which deserved no more than a whip and spurs.

The love-affair contributed to upsetting Caesar and making him *more sarcastic* and biting.

This spiritual ulceration of Caesar's profoundly astonished Mlle. Cadet.

One day a Roman aristocrat, nothing less than a prince, came to call on Mme. Dawson. He talked with her, with her daughters, and the Countess Brenda, and held forth about whether the hotels in Rome were full or empty, about the *pensions,* and the food in the restaurants, with a great wealth of details; afterwards he lamented that Mme. Dawson, as a relative of his, even though a very distant one, should have gone to a *ricevimento* at the French Embassy, and he boasted of belonging to the Black party in Rome.

When he was gone, Mlle. Cadet came over to Caesar, who was sunk in an arm-chair gazing at the ceiling, and asked him:

"What did you think of the prince?"

"What prince?"

"The gentleman who was here talking a moment ago."

"Ah, was he a prince?"

"Yes."

"As he talked about nothing but hotels, I took him to be the proprietor of one."

Mlle. Cadet told Mme. Dawson what Caesar had said, and she and her daughters were amused at his error.

X

A BALL

A LITTLE later than the real day, they got up a ball at the hotel in celebration of the French holiday Micarême.

When Caesar was asked if he thought of going to the ball, he said no; but Mlle. de Sandoval warned him that if he didn't go she would never speak to him again, and Mme. Dawson and the governess threatened him with like excommunication.

"But you know, these balls are very amusing," said Mme. Dawson.

"Do you think so?"

"I do, and so do you."

"Besides, an observer like you," added Mlle. Cadet, "can devote himself to taking notes."

"And why do you conclude that I am an observer?" asked Caesar.

"The idea! Because it is evident."

"And an observer with very evil intentions," insisted Mlle. de Sandoval.

"You credit me with qualities I haven't got."

Caesar had to accede, and the Dawson ladies and he were the first to enter the salon and take their seats. In one corner was a glass vase hung from the ceiling by a pulley.

"What is that?" Mme. Dawson asked a servant.

"It is a glass vase full of bonbons, which you have to break with a pole with your eyes closed."

"Ah, yes."

Since nobody else came in, the Dawson girls and Caesar wandered about looking into the cupboards and finding the Marchesa Sciacca's music and the Neapolitan's.

They looked out one of the salon windows. It was a detes able night, raining and hailing; the great drops were bouncir on the sidewalks of the Piazza Esedra. Water and hail fe mixed together, and for moments at a time the ground woul stay white, as if covered with a thin coating of pearls.

The fountain in the centre cast up its streams of wate which mingled with the rain, and the central jet shone in tl rays of the arc-lights; now and again the livid brilliance (lightning illuminated the stone arches and the rumbling (thunder was heard. . . .

Still nobody else came to the salon. Doubtless the ladi were preparing their toilets very carefully.

The first to appear, dressed for the ball, were the Marche Sciacca and her husband, accompanied by the inevitable Ca minatti.

The Marchesa, with her habitual brutality toward everybo that lived in the house, bowed with formal coolness to Mm Dawson, and sat down by the piano, as far away as possib from the French ladies.

She wore a gown of green silk, with lace and gold ornament She was very décolletée and had a fretful air. Her husbar was small and stooped, with a long moustache and shiny eye on his cheek-bones were the red spots frequent in consumptive and he spoke in a sharp voice.

"Are you acquainted with the Marquis?" Mme. Daws asked Caesar.

"Yes, he is a tiresome busybody," said Caesar, "the mc boresome fellow you could find. He stops you in the street tell you things. The other day he made me wait a quart of an hour at the door of a tourist agency, while he inquir the quickest way of getting to Moscow. 'Are you thinking going there?' I asked him. 'No; I just wanted to fi out. . . .' He is an idiot."

"God preserve us from your comments. What will you saying about us?" exclaimed Mlle. de Sandoval.

The Countess Brenda entered, with her husband, h *daughter, and a friend.* She was dressed in black, low in t

neck, and wore a collar of brilliants as big as filberts, which surrounded her bosom with rays of light and blinding reflections.

Her friend was a young lady of consummate beauty; a brunette with colour in her skin and features of flawless perfection; with neither the serious air nor the statuesqueness of a great beauty, and with none of the negroid tone of most brunettes. When she smiled she showed her teeth, which were a burst of whiteness. She was rather loaded with jewels, which gave her the aspect of an ancient goddess.

"You, who find everything wrong," said Mlle. Cadet to Caesar, "what have you to say of that woman? I have been looking at her ever since she came in, and I don't find the slightest defect."

"Nor I. It is a face which gives no indication that the least shadow of sorrow has ever crossed it. It is beauty as serene as a landscape or as the sea when calm. Moreover, that very perfection robs it of character. It seems to be less a human face than a symbol of an apathetic being and an apathetic beauty."

"We have found her defect," said Mlle. Cadet.

After introducing her friend to the ladies and to the young men, who were all dazzled, the Countess Brenda sat down near Mme. Dawson, in an antique arm-chair.

She was imposing.

"You look like a queen holding audience," Mlle. de Sandoval said to her.

"Your beloved is like an actual monument," Mlle. Cadet murmured jokingly, aside to Caesar.

"Yes, I think we ought to station a veteran at the door," retorted Caesar.

"A veteran! No, for mercy's sake! Poor lady! A warrior in active service, one on whom all the antipyrine in the world would make no impression," Mlle. Cadet replied maliciously.

Caesar smiled at the illusion.

SILENO MACARRONI

Among the people there was one gentleman that attracted Mlle. Cadet's special attention. He was apart from any group, but he knew everybody that arrived, This gentleman was fat, smiling, smooth-shaven, with a round, chubby, rosy face and the body of a Silenus. When he spoke he arched and lowered his eyebrows alternately, rolled his eyes, gesticulated with his fat, soft hands, and smiled and showed his teeth.

His way of greeting people was splendid.

"*Come sta, marchesa?*" he would say. "*Cavaliere!*" "*Commendatore!*" "*La contessina va bene?*" "*Oh! Egregio!*"

And the good gentleman would spread his arms, and close them, and look as if he wanted to embrace the whole of humanity to his abdomen, covered with a white waistcoat.

"Who can that gentleman be?" Mlle. Cadet asked various times.

"That? That is Signor Sileno Macarroni," said Caesar, "Commander of the Order of the Mighty Belly, Knight of the Round Buttocks, and of other distinguished Orders."

"He is a singer," said the Countess Brenda to Mlle. de Sandoval in a low tone.

"He is a singer," repeated Mlle. de Sandoval to her governess in a similar tone.

"Sileno Macarroni is a singer," said Mlle. Cadet, with equal mysteriousness, addressing Caesar.

"But is our friend Macarroni going to sing?" asked Caesar.

The question was passed from one person to another, and it was discovered that Macarroni was going to sing. As a matter of fact, the fat Silenus did sing, and everybody was startled to hear a high tenor voice issue from within that voluminous human being. The fat Silenus had the misfortune to sing false in the midst of his bravest trills, and the poor soul was overcome, despite the applause.

"Poor Macarroni!" said Caesar, "his high tenor heart must *be broken to bits.*"

"He is going," put in Mlle. Cadet. "What a shame!"
Sileno vanished and the pianist began to play waltzes.

THE WORLD AS A ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN

Carminatti was the first on the floor with his partner, who was the Marchesa Sciacca.

The Maltese lady danced with an abandon and a feline languor that imposed respect. One of the San Martino girls, dressed in white, like a vaporous fairy, danced with an officer in a blue uniform, a slim, distinguished person with languid eyes and rosy cheeks, who caused a veritable sensation among the ladies.

The other San Martino, in pale pink, was on a sofa chatting with a man of the cut-throat type, of jaundiced complexion, with bright eyes and a moustache so long as almost to touch his eyebrows.

"He is a Sicilian," Mlle. Cadet told Caesar; "behind us here they are saying rather curious things about the two of them."

The Countess Brenda's daughter was magnificent, with her milk-white skin, and her arms visible through gauze. Despite her beauty she didn't count many admirers; she was too insipid, and the majority of the young men turned with greater enthusiasm to the married women and to those of a very provocative type.

Mlle. de Sandoval, the most sought after of all, didn't wish to dance.

"My daughter is really very stiff," Mme. Dawson remarked. "Spanish women are like that."

"Yes, they often are," said Caesar.

Among all these Italians, who were rather theatrical and ridiculous, insincere and exaggerated, but who had great pliancy and great agility in their movements and their expression, there was one German family, consisting of several persons: a married couple with sons and daughters who seemed *to be all made from* one piece, cut from the same block.

While the rest were busy with the little incidents of the ball, they were talking about the Baths of Caracalla, the aqueducts, the Colosseum. The father, the mother, and the children repeated their lesson in Roman archeology, which they had learned splendidly.

"What very absurd people they are," murmured Caesar, watching them.

"Why?" said Mlle. de Sandoval.

"It appeals to these Germans as their duty to make one parcel of everything artistic there is in a country and swallow it whole; which seems to an ignoramus like me, a stupid piece of pretentiousness. The French, on the contrary, are on more solid ground; they don't understand anything that is not French, and they travel to have the pleasure of saying that Paris is the finest thing on earth."

"It's great luck to be so perfect as you are," retorted Mlle. de Sandoval, violently, "you can see other people's faults so clearly."

"You mistake," replied Caesar, coldly, "I do not rely on my own good qualities to enable me to speak badly of others."

"Then what do you rely on?"

"On my defects."

"Ah, have you defects? Do you admit it?"

"I not only admit it, but I take pride in having them."

Mlle. de Sandoval turned her head away contemptuously; the twist Caesar gave to her questions appeared to irritate her.

"Mlle. de Sandoval doesn't like me much," said Caesar to Mlle. Cadet.

"No? She generally says nice things about you."

"Perhaps my clothes appeal to her, or the way I tie my cravat; but my ideas displease her."

"Because you say such severe things."

"Why do you say that at this moment? Because I spoke disparagingly of those Germans? Are they attractive to you?"

"*Oh, no!* Not at all."

"*They look like* hunting dogs."

"But whom do you approve of? The English?"

"Not the English, either. They are a herd of cattle; sentimental, ridiculous people who are in ecstatics over their aristocracy and over their king. Latin peoples are something like cats, they are of the feline race; a Frenchman is like a fat, well-fed cat; an Italian is like an old Angora which has kept its beautiful fur; and the Spaniard is like the cats on a roof, skinny, bare of fur, almost too weak to howl with despair and hunger. . . . Then there are the ophidians, the Jews, the Greeks, the Armenians. . . ."

"Then for you the world is a zoological garden?"

"Well, isn't it?"

At midnight they tried to break the glass jar of bonbons. They blindfolded various men, and one by one they made them turn around a couple of times and then try to break the jar with a stick.

It was the Marquis Sciacca that did break the glass vase, and the pieces fell on his head.

"Have you hurt yourself?" people asked him.

"No," said Caesar, reassuringly, but aside; "his head is protected."

CHIROMANTIC INTERLUDE

After this cornucopia number, there was a series of other games and amusements, which required a hand-glass, a candle, and a bottle. The conversation in Mlle. de Sandoval's group jumped from one thing to another and finally arrived at palmistry.

Mlle. de Sandoval asked Caesar if he, as a Spaniard, knew how to tell fortunes by the hand, and he jokingly replied that he did. Three or four hands were stretched out toward Caesar, and he said whatsoever his imagination suggested, foolishness, absurdities, impertinences; a little of everything.

When anybody was a bit puzzled at Caesar's words, he said:

"Don't pay any attention to it; these are absurdities."

Afterwards Mlle. Cadet told Caesar that she was going to cast his horoscope.

"Good! Out with it."

The governess, who was clever, studied Caesar's hand and expressed herself in sibylline terms:

"You have something of everything, a little of some things and a great deal of others; you are not a harmonious individual."

"No?"

"No. You are very intelligent."

"Thank you."

"Let the sibyl talk," said the Sandoval girl.

"You have a strong sense of logic," the governess went on.

"That's possible."

"You are good and bad! You have much imagination and very little; you are at the same time very brave and very timid. You have a loving nature, but it is asleep, and little will-power."

"Little and . . . a great deal," said Caesar.

"No, little."

"Do you believe that I have little will-power?"

"I am telling you what your hand says."

"Look here. My hand's opinion doesn't interest me so much as yours, because you are an intelligent woman. Do you believe I have no will-power?"

"A sibyl doesn't discuss her affirmations."

"Now you are worried about your lack of will-power," said Mlle. de Sandoval, mockingly.

"Yes, I am, a bit."

"Well, I think you have will-power enough," she retorted; "what you do lack is a little more amiability."

"Fortunately for you and for me, you are not so perspicacious in psychology as this young lady."

"I don't expect to earn my living telling fortunes."

"I don't believe this young lady expects to, either. You have told me what I am," Caesar pursued; "now tell me what is going to happen to me."

"Let me look," said Mlle. Cadet; "close your hand. You *will make a journey.*"

"Very good! I like that."

"You will get into a desperate struggle. . . "

"I like that, too."

"And you will win, and you will be defeated. . . ."

"I don't like that so much."

Mlle. Cadet could not give other details. Her sibylline science extended no further. During this chiromantic interlude, the dancing kept up, until finally, about three in the morning, the party ended.

XI

A SOUNDING-LINE IN THE DARK WORLD

THE ADVICE OF TWO ABBÉS

THE Abbé Preciozi several times advised Caesar to make a new attempt at a reconciliation with the Cardinal; but Caesar always refused.

"He is a man incapable of understanding me," he would insist with naïve arrogance.

Preciozi felt a great liking for his new friend, who invited him to meals at good hotels and treated him very frequently. Almost every morning he went to call on Caesar on one pretext or another, and they would go for a walk and chat about various things.

Preciozi was beginning to believe that his friend was a man with a future. Some explanations that Caesar gave him about the mechanism of the stock-exchange convinced the abbé that he was in the presence of a great financier.

Preciozi talked to all his friends and acquaintances about Cardinal Fort's nephew, picturing him as an extraordinary man; some took these praises as a joke; others thought that it was really very possible that the Spaniard had great talent; only one abbé, who was a teacher in a college, felt a desire to meet the Cardinal's nephew, and Preciozi introduced him to Caesar.

This abbé was named Cittadella, and he was fat, rosy, and blond; he looked more like a singer than a priest.

Caesar invited the two abbés to dine at a restaurant and requested Preciozi to do the ordering.

"*So you are* a nephew of Cardinal Fort's?" asked Cittadella.

"Yes."

"His own nephew?"

"His own nephew; son of his sister."

"And he hasn't done anything for you?"

"Nothing."

"It's a pity. He is a man of great influence, of great talent."

"Influence, I believe; talent, I doubt," said Caesar.

"Oh, no, no! He is an intelligent man."

"But I have heard that his *Theological Commentaries* is absolutely absurd."

"No, no."

"A crude, banal book, full of stupidities. . . ."

"*Macché!*" exclaimed the indignant Preciozi, neglecting the culinary conflict he was engaged in.

"All right. It makes no difference," replied Caesar, smiling. "Whether he is a famous man, as you two say, or a blockhead, as I think, the fact remains that my uncle doesn't wish to have anything to do with me."

"You must have done something to him," said Cittadella.

"No; the only thing is that when I was small they told me the Cardinal wished me to be a priest, and I answered that I didn't care to be."

"And why so?"

"It seems to me a poor job. It's evident that one doesn't make much at it."

Cittadella sighed.

"Yes, and what's more," Preciozi put in, "this gentleman says to anybody who cares to listen, that religion is a farce, that Catholicism is like a dish of Jewish meat with Roman sauce. Is it possible that a Cardinal should bother about a nephew that talks like that?"

The Abbé Cittadella looked very serious and remarked that it is necessary to believe, or at least to seem to believe, in the truths of religion.

"Is the Cardinal supposed to have money?" asked Caesar.

"Yes, I should say he is," replied Preciozi.

"Your sister and you will be the only heirs," said Cittadella.

"Of course," agreed Preciozi.

"Has he made a will?" asked Caesar.

"All the better if he hasn't," said one of the abbés.

"If we could only poison him," sighed Caesar, with melancholy.

"Don't talk of such things just as we are going to eat," said Preciozi.

The dinner was brought, and the two abbés did it the honour it deserved.

Preciozi deserved congratulations for his excellent selection. They ordered good wines and drank merry toasts.

"What an admirable secretary Preciozi would be, if I got to be a personage!" exclaimed Caesar. "Twenty thousand francs or so salary, his board, and the duty of choosing the dinner for the next day. That's my proposal."

The abbé blushed with pleasure, emptied his glass of wine, and murmured:

"If it depended on me!"

"The fact is that the way things are arranged today is no good," said Caesar. "A hundred years ago, by the mere fact of being a Cardinal's nephew, I should have been somebody."

"That's true," exclaimed Preciozi.

"And as I should have no scruples, and neither would you two, we would have plunged into life strenuously, and sacked Rome, and the whole world would be ours."

"You talk like a Caesar Borgia," said Preciozi, aroused. "You are a true Spaniard."

"Today one must have something to stand on," said Cittadella, coldly.

"Friend Cittadella," retorted Caesar, "I, as you see me here, am the man who knows the most about financial matters in all Spain, and I believe I shall soon get to where I can say, in all Europe. I put my knowledge at the service of whoever pays me. I am like one of your old *condottieri*, a mercenary *general. I* am ready to win battles for the Jewish bank, or

against the Jewish bank, for the Church or against the Church."

"For the Church is better. Against the Church we cannot assist you," said Preciozi.

"I will try first, for the Church. To whom can you recommend me first?"

The two abbés said nothing, and drank in silence.

"Perhaps Verry would see him," said Cittadella.

"Hm! . . ." replied Preciozi. "I rather doubt it."

"What sort of a party is he?" asked Caesar.

"He is one of those *prelati* that come out of the College of Nobles," said Cittadella, "and who get on, even if they are no good. Here they consider him a haughty Spaniard; they blame him for wearing his robes, and for always taking an automobile when he goes to Castel Gandolfo. The priests hate him because he is a Jesuit and a Spaniard."

"And wherein does his strength lie?"

"In the Society, and in his knowing several languages. He was educated in England."

"From what you two tell me of him, he gives me the impression of a fatuous person."

A bottle of champagne was brought in and the three of them drank, toasting and touching glasses.

"If I were in your place," said Cittadella, after thinking a long while, "I shouldn't try to get at people in high places, but people who are inconspicuous and yet have influence in your country."

"For instance. . . ."

"For instance, Father Herreros, at the convent in Trastevere."

"And Father Miró too," added Preciozi, "and if you could talk to Father Ferrer, of the Gregorian University, it wouldn't be a bad idea."

"That will be more difficult," said Cittadella.

"You could tell them," Preciozi suggested, "that your uncle the Cardinal sent you, and hint that he doesn't want anybody to know that he is backing you."

"And if somebody should write to my uncle?"

"You mustn't say anything definite. You must speak ambiguously. Besides, in case they did write, we would fix it up in the office."

Caesar began to laugh naïvely. Afterwards, the two abbés, a little excited by the food and the good wine, started in to have a violent discussion, speaking Italian. Caesar paid the bill, and pretending that he had an urgent engagement, took leave of them and went out.

A SPANISH MONK

The next day Caesar went to look up Father Herreros. He had not yet succeeded in forming a plan. His only idea was to see if he could take advantage of some chance: to follow a scent and be on the alert, in case something new should start up on one side or the other.

Father Herreros lived in a convent in Trastevere. Caesar took the tram in the Piazza Venezia, and got out after crossing the Tiber, near the Via delle Fratte.

He soon found the convent; it had a yellow portal with a Latin inscription which sang the gymnastic glories of Saint Pascual Bailón. Above the inscription there was a picture, in which a monk, no doubt Bailón, was dancing among the clouds.

On the lintel of the gate were the arms of Spain, and at the sides, two medallions bearing hands wounded in the palm.

The convent door was old and quartered. Caesar knocked.

A lay-brother, with a suspicious glance, came out to admit him, told him to wait, and left him alone. After some while, he came back and asked him to follow him.

They went down a small passage and up a staircase, which was at the end, and then along a corridor on the main floor. On one side of this corridor, in his cell, they found Father Herreros.

Caesar, after bowing and introducing himself, sat down, as the monk asked him to do, in a chair with its back to the light.

Caesar began to explain why he had come, and as he had prepared what he was going to say, he employed his attention, while speaking, on the cage and the kind of big bird which were before his eyes.

Father Herreros had a big rough head, black heavy eyebrows, a short nose, an enormous mouth, yellow teeth, and grey hair. He wore a chocolate-coloured robe, open enough to show his whole neck down to his chest. The movement of the good monk's lips was that of a man who wished to pass for keen and insinuating. His robe was dirty and he doubtless had the habit of leaving cigarette stubs on the table.

The cell had one window, and in front of it a bookcase. Caesar made an effort to read the titles. They were almost all Latin books, the kind that nobody reads.

Father Herreros began to ask Caesar questions. In his brain, he was doubtless wondering why Cardinal Fort's nephew should come to him.

After many useless words they got to the concrete point that Caesar wanted to take up, Father Herreros's acquaintance in Spain, and the monk said that he knew a very rich widow who had property in Toledo. When Caesar went to Madrid, he would give him a letter of recommendation to her.

"I cannot keep you any longer now, because a Mexican lady is waiting for me," said Father Herreros.

Caesar arose, and after shaking the monk's fat hand, he left the convent. He returned to Rome on foot, crossing the river again, and looking at the Tiberine island; and arrived without hurrying at the hotel. He wrote to his friend Azugaray, requesting him to discover, by the indications he gave him, who the rich widow that had property in Toledo could be.

THE LICENTIATE MIRÓ

The next day Caesar decided to pursue his investigations, and went to see Father Miró.

Father Miró lived in a college in the Via Monserrato.

Caesar inspected the map of Rome, looking for that street, and found that it is located in the vicinity of the Campo de' Fiori, and took his way thither.

The spring day was magnificent; the sky was blue, without a cloud; the tiled roofs of some of the palaces were decorated with borders of plants and flowers; in the street, dry and flooded with sunshine, a water-carrier in a cart full of fat, green bottles, passed by, singing and cracking his whip.

Caesar crossed the Campo de' Fiori, a very lively, plebeian square, full of canvas awnings with open stalls of fruit under them. In the middle stood the statue of Giordano Bruno, with a crown of flowers around its neck.

Then he took the Via de' Cappellari, a narrow lane and dirty enough. From one side to the other clothes were hung out to dry.

He came to the college and entered the church contiguous to it. He asked for Father Miró; a sacristan with a long moustache and a worn blue overcoat, took him to another entrance, made him mount an old wooden staircase, and conducted him to the office of the man he was looking for.

Father Miró was a tiny little man, dark and filthy, with a worn-out cassock, covered with dandruff, and a large dirty square cap with a big rosette.

"Will you tell me what you want?" said the little priest in a sullen tone.

Caesar introduced himself, and explained in a few words who he was and what he proposed.

Father Miró, without asking him to sit down, answered rapidly, saying that he had no acquaintance with matters of finance or speculation.

Caesar felt a shudder of anger at the rudeness with which he was treated by this draggled little priest, and felt a vehement desire to take him by the neck and twist it, like a chicken's.

Despite his anger, he did not change expression, and he asked the priest smilingly if he knew who could give him advice about those questions.

"*You can see* Father Ferrer at the Gregorian University,

or Father Mendía. He is an encyclopedist. It was he who wrote the theological portion of the encyclical *Pascendi,* the one about Modernism. He is a man of very great learning."

"He will do. Many thanks," and Caesar turned toward the door.

"Excuse me for not having asked you to sit down, but . . ."

"No matter," Caesar replied, rapidly, and he went out to the stairs.

In view of the poor result of his efforts, he decided to go to the Gregorian University. He was told it was in the Via del Seminario, and supposed it must be the large edifice with little windowed bridges over two streets.

That edifice was the Collegio Romano; the Gregorian University was in the same street, but further on, opposite the Post Office Department. Father Ferrer could not receive him, because he was holding a class; and after they had gone up and come down and taken Caesar's card for Father Mendía, they told him he was out.

Caesar concluded that it was not so easy to find a crack through which one could get information of what was going on in the clerical world.

"I see that the Church gives them all a defensive instinct which they make good use of. They are really only poor devils, but they have a great organization, and it cannot be easy to get one's fingers through the meshes of their net."

XII

A MEETING ON THE PINCIO

A WALK IN THE VILLA BORGHESE

AT the beginning of Holy Week Laura returned to the hotel, at lunch-time.

"And your husband?" Caesar asked her.

"He didn't want to come. Rome bores him. He is giving all his attention to taking care of the heart-disease he says he has."

"Is it serious?"

"I think not. Every time I see him I find him with a new disease and a new diet; one time it is vegetarian, another nothing but meat, another time he says one should eat only grapes, or nothing but bread."

"Then I see that he belongs to the illustrious brotherhood of the insane."

"You are not far from joining that brotherhood yourself."

"Dear sister, I am one of the few sane men that go stumbling around this insane asylum let loose we call the earth."

"What you say about men is the truth, even though you are not an exception. Really, the more I have to do with men, the more convinced I am that any one of them who is not crazy, is stupid or vain or proud. . . . How much more intelligent, discreet, logical we women are!"

"Don't tell me. You are marvels; modest, kindly toward your rivals, so little given to humiliating your neighbours, male or female. . . ."

"Yes, yes; but we are not so conceited or such play-actors as you are. A woman may think herself pretty and amiable and sweet, and not be so. That is true; but on the other hand, *every man thinks* himself braver than the Cid, even if he is

afraid of a fly, and more talented than Seneca, even if he is a dolt."

"To sum up, men are a calamity."

"Just so."

"And women spend their lives fishing for these calamities."

"They need them; there are inferior things which still are necessary."

"And there are superior things which are good for nothing."

"Will you come and take a drive with me, philosopher brother?"

"Where?"

"Let's go to the Villa Borghese. The carriage will be here in a moment."

"All right. Let us go there."

A two-horse victoria with rubber tires was waiting at the door, and Laura and Caesar got in. The carriage went past the Treasury, and out the Porta Salaria, and entered the gardens of the Villa Borghese.

The morning had been rainy; the ground was damp; the wind waved the tree-tops gently and caused a murmur like the tide. The carriage rolled slowly along the avenues. Laura was very gay and chatty. Caesar listened to her as one listens to a bird warbling.

Many times while listening he thought: "What is there inside this head? What is the master idea of her life? Has she really any idea about life, or has she none?"

After several rounds they crossed the viaduct that unites the Villa Borghese with the Pincio gardens.

FROM THE PINCIO TERRACE

They approached the great terrace of the gardens by an avenue that has busts of celebrated men along both sides.

"Poor great men!" exclaimed Caesar. "Their statues serve only to decorate a public garden."

"They had their lives," replied Laura, gaily; "now we have ours."

Laura ordered the coachman to stop a moment. The air was still murmuring in the foliage, the birds singing, and the clouds flying slowly across the sky.

A man with a black box approached the carriage to offer them postcards.

"Buy two or three," said Laura.

Caesar bought a few and put them into his pocket. The vendor withdrew and Laura continued to look at Rome with enthusiasm.

"Oh, how beautiful, how lovely it is! I never get tired of looking at it. It is my favourite city. *'O fior d'ogni cittá, donna del mondo.'*"

"She is no longer mistress of the world, little sister."

"For me she is. Look at St. Peter's. It looks like a shred of cloud."

"Yes, that's so. It's of a blue shade that seems transparent."

Bells were ringing and great majestic white clouds kept moving along the horizon; on the Janiculum the statue of Garibaldi rose up gallantly into the air, like a bird ready to take wing.

"When I look at Rome this way," murmured Laura, "I feel a pang, a pang of grief."

"Why?"

"Because I remember that I must die, and then I shall not come back to see Rome. She will be here still, century after century, full of sunlight, and I shall be dead. . . . It is horrible, horrible!"

"And your religion?"

"Yes, I know. I believe I shall see other things; but not these things that are so beautiful."

"You are an Epicurean."

"It is so beautiful to be alive!"

They stayed there looking at the panorama. Below, in the

Piazza del Popolo, they saw a red tram slipping along, which looked, at that distance, like a toy.

A tilbury, driven by a woman, stopped near their carriage. The woman was blond with green eyes, prominent cheek-bones, and a little fur cap. At her feet lay an enormous dog with long flame-coloured hair.

"She must be a Russian," said Caesar.

"Yes. Do you like that type?"

"She has a lot of character. She looks like one of the women that would order servants to be whipped."

The Russian was smiling vaguely. Laura told the coachman to drive on. They made a few rounds in the avenues of the Pincio. The music was beginning; a few carriages, and groups of soldiers and seminarians, crowded around the bandstand; Laura didn't care for brass bands, they were too noisy for her, and she gave the coachman orders to drive to the Corso.

MEETING MARCHMONT

They passed in front of the Villa Medici, and when they got near the Piazza della Trinitá de' Monti they met a man on horseback, who, on seeing them, immediately approached the carriage. It was Archibald Marchmont, who had just arrived in Rome.

"I thought you had forgotten us," said Laura.

"I forget you, Marchesa! Never."

"You say you came to Rome. . . ."

"From Nice I had to return to London, because my father was seriously ill with an attack of gout."

"He is well again?"

"Yes, thank you. You are coming back from a drive?"

"Yes."

"Don't you want to come and have tea with my wife and me?"

"Where?"

"At the Hotel Excelsior. We are staying there. Will you come?"

"All right."

Laura accepted, and they went to the Via Veneto with the Englishman riding beside them.

They went into the hotel and passed through to the "hall" full of people. Marchmont sent word to his wife by a servant, to come down. Laura and Caesar seated themselves with the Englishman.

"This hotel is unbearable," exclaimed Marchmont; "there is nothing here but Americans."

"Your wife, however, must like that," said Caesar.

"No. Susanna is more European every day, and she doesn't care for the shrieking elegance of her compatriots. Besides, her father is here, and that makes her feel less American."

"It is an odd form of filial enthusiasm," remarked Caesar.

"It doesn't shock me. I almost think it's the rule," replied Marchmont; "at home I could see that my brothers and sisters hated one another cordially, and that every member of the family wanted to get away from the others. You two who are so fond of each other are a very rare instance. Is it frequent in Spain that brothers and sisters like one another?"

"Yes, there are instances of it," answered Caesar, laughing.

Mrs. Marchmont arrived, accompanied by an old man who evidently was her father, and two other men. Susanna was most smart; she greeted Laura and Caesar very affably, and presented her father, Mr. Russell; then she presented an English author, tall, skinny, with blue eyes, a white beard, and hair like a halo; and then a young Englishman from the Embassy, a very distinguished person named Kennedy, who was a Catholic.

TEA

After the introductions they passed into the dining-room, which was most impressive. It was an exhibition of very smart women, some of them ideally beautiful, and idle men. All about them resounded a nasal English of the American sort.

Susanna Marchmont served the tea and did the honours to *her guests.* *They* all talked French, excepting Mr. Russell,

who once in a long while uttered some categorical monosyllable in his own language.

Mr. Russell was not of the classic Yankee type; he looked like a vulgar Englishman. He was a serious man, with a short moustache, grey-headed, with three or four gold teeth.

What to Caesar seemed wonderful in this gentleman was his economy of words. There was not one useless expression in his vocabulary, and not the slightest redundancy; whatever partook of merit, prestige, or nobility was condensed, for him, to the idea of value; whatever partook of arrangement, cleanliness, order, was condensed to the word "comfort"; so that Mr. Russell, with a very few words, had everything specified.

To Susanna, imbued with her preoccupation in supreme *chic*, her father no doubt did not seem a completely decorative father; but he gave Caesar the impression of a forceful man.

Near them, at a table close by, was a little blond man, with a hooked nose and a scanty imperial, in company with a fat lady. They bowed to Marchmont and his wife.

"That gentleman looks like a Jew," said Caesar.

"He is," replied Marchmont, "that is Señor Pereyra, a rich Jew; of Portuguese origin, I think."

"How quickly you saw it!" exclaimed Susanna.

"He has that air of a sick goat, so frequent in Jews."

"His wife has nothing sickly about her, or thin either," remarked Laura.

"No," said Caesar; "his wife represents another Biblical type; one of the fat kine of somebody's dream, which foretold abundance and a good harvest."

The Englishman, Kennedy, had also little liking for Jews.

"I do not hate a Jew as anti-Christian," said Caesar; "but as super-Christian. Nor do I hate the race, but the tendency they have never to be producers, but always middlemen, and because they incarnate so well for our era the love of money, and of joy and pleasure."

The English author was a great partisan of Jews, and he asserted that they were more distinguished in science and the arts than any other race.

The Jewish question was dropped in an instant, when they saw a smart lady come in accompanied by a pale man with a black shock of hair and an uneasy eye.

"That is the Hungarian violinist Kolozsvar," said Susanna.

"Kolozsvar, Kolozsvar!" they heard everybody saying.

"Is he a great virtuoso?" Caesar asked Kennedy.

"No, I think not," answered Kennedy. "It seems that this Hungarian's speciality is playing the waltzes and folk-songs of his own country, which is certainly not anything great; but his successes are not obtained with the violin, but among the women. The ladies in London fight for him. His game is to pass himself off as a fallen man, depraved, worn-out. There you have his phraseology. . . . They see a man to save, to raise up, and convert into a great artist, and almost all of them yield to this temptation."

"That is comical," said Caesar, looking curiously at the fiddler and his lady.

"To a Spaniard," replied Kennedy, "it is comical; and probably it would be to an Italian too; but in England there are many women that have a purely imaginative idealism, a romanticism fed on ridiculous novels, and they fall into traps like these, which seem clumsy and grotesque to you here in the South, where people are more clear-sighted and realistic."

Caesar watched the brave fiddler, who played the rôle of a man used up, to great perfection.

After tea, Susanna invited them to go up to her rooms, and Laura and her brother and Kennedy and Mr. Russell went.

The English author had met a colleague, with whom he stayed behind talking, and Marchmont remained in the "hall," as if it did not seem to him proper for him to go to his wife's rooms.

Susanna's rooms were very high, had balconies on the Via Veneto, and were almost opposite Queen Margherita's palace. One overlooked the garden and could see the Queen Mother taking her walks, which is not without its importance for persons who live in a republic.

Susanna was most amiable to Laura; repeated to all of them

her invitation to come and see her again; and after they had all promised to see one another frequently, Caesar and Laura went down to their carriage, and took a turn on the Corso by twilight.

XIII

ESTHETICS AND DEMAGOGY

SUSANNA AND THE YOUNGSTERS

FROM this meeting on, Caesar noticed that Marchmont paid court to Laura with much persistence. A light-hearted, coquettish woman, it pleased Laura to be pursued by a person like this Englishman, young, distinguished, and rich; but she was not prepared to yield. Her bringing-up, her class-feelings impelled her to consider adultery a heinous thing. Nor was divorce a solution for her, since accepting it would oblige her to cease being a Catholic and to quarrel irrevocably with the Cardinal. Marchmont showed no discretion in the way he paid court to Laura; he cared nothing about his wife, and talked of her with profound contempt. . . .

Laura found herself besieged by the Englishman; she couldn't decide to discourage him entirely, and at critical moments she would take the train, go off to Naples, and come back two or three days later, doubtless with more strength for withstanding the siege.

"As a matter of reciprocal justice, since he makes love to my sister, I ought to make love to his wife," thought Caesar, and he went several times to the Hotel Excelsior to call on Susanna.

The Yankee wife was full of complaints against her husband. Her father had advised her simply to get a divorce, but she didn't want to. She found such a solution lacking in distinction, and no doubt she considered the advice of an author in her own country very true, who had given this triple *injunction to the* students of a woman's college: "Do not *drink, that is,* do not drink too much; do not smoke, that is,

do not smoke too much; and do not get married, that is, do not get married too much."

It did not seem quite right to Susanna to get married too much. Besides she had a desire to become a Catholic. One day she questioned Caesar about it:

"You want to change your religion!" exclaimed Caesar, "What for? I don't believe you are going to find your lost faith by becoming a Catholic."

"And what do you think about it, Kennedy?" Susanna asked the young Englishman, who was there too.

"To me a Catholic woman seems doubly enchanting."

"You would not marry a woman who wasn't a Catholic?"

"No, indeed," the Englishman proclaimed.

Caesar and Kennedy disagreed about everything.

Susanna discussed her plans, and constantly referred to Paul Bourget's novel *Cosmopolis*, which had obviously influenced her in her inclination for Catholicism.

"Are there many Jewish ladies who aspire to be baptized and become Catholics, as Bourget says?" asked Susanna.

"Bah!" exclaimed Caesar.

"You do not believe that either?"

"No, it strikes me as a piece of naivety in this good soul of a novelist. To become a Catholic, I don't believe requires more than some few pesetas."

"You are detestable, as a Cardinal's nephew."

"I mean that I don't perceive that there are any obstacles to prevent anybody from becoming a Catholic, as there are to prevent his becoming rich. What a high ambition, to aspire to be a Catholic! While nobody anywhere does anything but laugh at Catholics; and it has become an axiom: 'A Catholic country is a country bound for certain ruin.'"

Kennedy burst out laughing.

Susanna said that she had no real faith, but that she did have a great enthusiasm for churches and for choirs, for the smell of incense and religious music.

"Spain is the place for all that," said Kennedy. "Here in Italy the Church ceremonies are too gay. Not so in Spain,

at Toledo, at Burgos, there is an austerity in the cathedrals, an unworldliness. . . ."

"Yes," said Caesar; "unhappily we have nothing left there but ceremonies. At the same time, the people are dying of hunger."

They discussed whether it is better to live in a decorative, esthetic sphere, or in a more humble and practical one; and Susanna and Kennedy stood up for the superiority of an esthetic life.

As they left the hotel Caesar said to Kennedy:

"Allow me a question. Have you any intentions concerning Mrs. Marchmont?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Simply because I shouldn't go to see her often, so as not to be in the way."

"Thank you ever so much. But I have no intentions in relation to her. She is too beautiful and too rich a woman for a modest employee like me to fix his eyes on."

"Bah! A modest diplomat! That is absurd. It is merely that you don't take to her."

"No. It's because she is a queen. There ought to be some defect in her face to make her human."

"Yes; that's true. She is too much of a prize beauty."

"That is the defect in the Yankee women; they have no character. The weight of tradition might be fatal to industry and modern life, but it is the one thing that creates the spirituality of the old countries. Beyond contradiction American women have intelligence, beauty, energy, attractive flashes, but they lack that particular thing created by centuries: character. At times they have very charming impulses. Have you heard the story about Prince Torlonia's wife?"

"No."

"Well, Torlonia's present wife was an American girl worth millions, who came with letters to the prince. He took her about Rome, and at the end of some days he said to her, supposing that the beautiful American had the intention of marrying: *'I will introduce* some young noblemen to you'; and she

answered: 'Don't introduce anybody to me; because you please me more than anybody'; and she married him."

"It was a pretty impulse."

"Yes, Americans do things like that on the spur of the moment. But if you saw a Spanish woman behave that way, it would seem wrong to you."

Chattering amicably they came to the Piazza Esedra.

"Would you care to have lunch with me?" said Kennedy.

"Just what I was going to propose to you."

"I eat alone."

"I do not. I eat with my sister."

"The Marchesa di Vaccarone?"

"Yes."

"Then you must pardon me if I accept your invitation, for I am very anxious to meet her."

"Then come along."

RUSKIN AND THE PHILISTINES

They reached the hotel and Caesar introduced his friend to Laura.

"He is an admirer of yours."

"A respectful admirer . . . from a distance," explained Kennedy.

"But are there admirers of that sort?" asked Laura, laughing.

"Here you have one," said the Englishman. "I have known you by sight ever since I came to Rome, and have never had the pleasure of speaking to you until today."

"And have you been here a long time?"

"Nearly two years."

"And do you like Rome; eh?"

"I should say so! At first, I didn't, I must admit. It was a disappointment to me. I had dreamed so much about Rome!" and Kennedy talked of the books and guides he had read about the Eternal City.

"I must admit that I had never dreamed about Rome," said Caesar.

"And you boast of that?" asked Laura.

"No, I don't boast of it, I merely state it. I understand how agreeable it is to know things. Caesar died here! Cicero made speeches here! Saint Peter stumbled over this stone! It is fine! But not knowing things is also very comfortable. I am rather like a barbarian walking indifferently among monuments he knows nothing about."

"Doesn't such an idea make you ashamed?"

"No, why? It would be a bother to me to know a lot of things offhand. To pass by a mountain and know how it was thrown up, what it is composed of, what its flora and fauna are; to get to a town and know its history in detail. . . . What things to be interested in! It's tiresome! I hate history too much. I far prefer to be ignorant of everything, and especially the past, and from time to time to offer myself a capricious, arbitrary explanation."

"But I think that knowing things not only is not tiresome," said Kennedy, "but is a great satisfaction."

"You think even learning things is a satisfaction?"

"Thousands of years ago one could know things almost without learning them; nowadays in order to know, one has to learn. That is natural and logical."

"Yes, certainly. And the effort to learn about useful things seems natural and logical to me too, but not to learn about merely agreeable things. To learn medicine and mechanics is logical; but to learn to look at a picture or to hear a symphony is an absurdity."

"Why?"

"At any rate the neophytes that go to see a Rafael picture or to hear a Bach sonata and have an exclamation all ready, give me the sad impression of a flock of lambs. As for your sublime pedagogues of the Ruskin type, they seem to me to be the fine flower of priggishness, of pedantry, of the most objectionable bourgeoisie."

"What things your brother is saying!" exclaimed Kennedy.

"You shouldn't notice him," said Laura.

"*Those artistic* pedagogues enrage me; they remind me of

Protestant pastors and of the friars that go around dressed like peasants, and who I think are called Brothers of the Christian Doctrine. The pedagogues are Brothers of the Esthetic Doctrine, one of the stupidest inventions that ever occurred to the English. I don't know which I find more ridiculous, the Salvation Army or Ruskin's books."

"Why have you this hatred for Ruskin?"

"I find him an idiot. I only skimmed through a book of his called *The Seven Lamps of Architecture,* and the first thing I read was a paragraph in which he said that to use an imitation diamond or any other imitation stone was a lie, an imposition, and a sin. I immediately said: 'This man who thinks a diamond is the truth and paste a lie, is a stupid fool who doesn't deserve to be read.'"

"Yes, all right: you take one point of view and he takes another. I understand why Ruskin wouldn't please you. What I do not understand is why you find it absurd that if a person has a desire to penetrate into the beauties of a symphony or a picture, he should do so. What is there strange in that?"

"You are right," said Caesar; "whoever wants to learn, should. I have done so about financial questions."

"Is it true that your brother knows all about questions of money?" Kennedy asked Laura.

"He says so."

"I haven't much belief in his financial knowledge."

"No?"

"No, I have not. You are a sort of dilettante, half nihilist, half financier. You would like to pass for a tranquil, well-balanced man, for what is called a philistine, but you cannot compass it."

"I will compass it. It is true that I want to be a philistine, but a philistine out in the real world. All those great artists you people admire, Goethe, Ruskin, were really philistines, who were in the business of being interested in poetry and statues and pictures."

"*Moncada, you* are a sophist," said Kennedy.

"Possibly I am wrong in this discussion," retorted Caesar, "but the feeling I have is right. Artists irritate me; they seem to me like old ladies with a flatulency that prevents their breathing freely."

Kennedy laughed at the definition.

CHIC AND THE REVOLUTION

"I understand hating bad kings and conquerors; but artists! What harm do they do?" said Laura.

"Artists are always doing harm to the whole of humanity. They have invented an esthetic system for the use of the rich, and they have killed the Revolution. The *chic* put an end to the Revolution. And now everything is coming back; enthusiasm for the aristocracy, for the Church; the cult of kings. People look backward and the Revolutionary movement is paralysed. The people that irritate me most are those esthetes of the Ruskin school, for whom everything is religious: having money, buying jewels, blowing one's nose . . . everything is religious. Vulgar creatures, lackeys that they are!"

"My brother is a demagogue," said Laura ironically.

"Yes," added Kennedy; "he doesn't like categories."

"But each thing has its value whether he likes it or not."

"I do not deny different values, or even categories. There are things of great value in life; some natural, like youth, beauty, strength; others more artificial, like money, social position; but this idea of distinction, of aristocratic fineness, is a farce. It is a literary legend in the same style as the one current in novels, which tells us that the aristocrats of old families close their doors to rich Americans, or like that other story Mrs. Marchmont was talking to us of, about the Jewish ladies who were crazy to become Catholics."

"I don't see what you are trying to prove by all this," said Laura.

"*I am* trying to prove that all there is underneath dis*tinguished society* is money, for which reason it doesn't matter

if it is destroyed. The cleverest and finest man, if he has no money, will die of hunger in a corner. Smart society, which thinks itself superior, will never receive him, because being really superior and intelligent is of no value on the market. On the other hand, when it is a question of some very rich brute, he will succeed in being accepted and fêted by the aristocrats, because money has a real value, a quotable value, or I'd better say, it is the only thing that has a quotable value."

"What you are saying isn't true. A man doesn't go with the best people merely because he is rich."

"No, certainly; not immediately. There is a preparatory process. He begins by robbing people in some miserable little shop, and feels himself democratic. Then he robs in a bank, and at that period he feels that he is a Liberal and begins to experience vaguely aristocratic ideas. If business goes splendidly, the aristocratic ideas get crystallized. Then he can come to Rome and go into ecstasies over all the humbugs of Catholicism; and after that, one is authorized to acknowledge that the religion of our fathers is a beautiful religion, and one finishes by giving a tip to the Pope, and another to Cardinal Verry, so that they will make him Prince of the Ecumenical Council or Marquis of the Holy Crusade."

"What very stupid and false ideas," exclaimed Laura. "Really I appreciate having a brother who talks in such a vulgar way."

"You are an aristocrat and the truth doesn't please you. But such are the facts. I can see the chief of the bureau of Papal titles. What fun he must have thinking up the most appropriate title for a magnate of Yankee tinned beef or for an illustrious Andean general! How magnificent it would be to gather all the Bishops *in partibus infidelium* and all the people with Papal titles in one drawing-room! The Bishop of Nicaea discussing with the Marquis of the Holy Roman Empire; the Marchioness of Easter Sunday flirting with the Bishop of Sion, while the Patriarchs of Thebes, Damascus, and Trebizond played bridge with the sausage manufacturer, Mr. Smiles, the pork king, or with the illustrious General Pérez, the

hero of Guachinanguito. What a moving spectacle it would be!"

"You are a clown!" said Laura.

"He is a finished satirist," added Kennedy.

CAESAR'S PLAN

After lunch, Laura, Kennedy, and Caesar went into the salon, and Laura introduced the Englishman to the San Martino girls and the Countess Brenda. They stayed there chatting until four o'clock, at which time the San Martinos got ready to go out in a motor car, and Laura, with the Countess and her daughter, in a carriage.

Caesar and Kennedy went into the street together.

"You are awfully well fixed here," said Kennedy, "with no Americans, no Germans, or any other barbarians."

"Yes, this hotel is a hive of petty aristocrats."

"Your sister was telling me that you might pick out a very rich wife here, among the girls."

"Yes, my sister would like me to live here, in a foreign country, in cowlike tranquillity, looking at pictures and statues, and travelling pointlessly. That wouldn't be living for me; I am not a society man. I require excitement, danger. . . . Though I warn you that I am not in the least courageous."

"You're not?"

"Not at all. Not now. At moments I believe I could control myself and take a trench without wavering."

"But you have some fixed plan, haven't you?"

"Yes, I expect to go back to Spain, and work there."

"At what?"

"In politics."

"Are you patriotic?"

"Yes, up to a certain point. I have no transcendental idea of patriotism at all. Patriotism, as I interpret it, is a matter of curiosity. I believe that there is strength in Spain. If this strength could be led in a given direction, where would it get

to? That is my form of patriotism; as I say, it is an experimental form."

Kennedy looked at Caesar with curiosity.

"And how can it help you with your plans to stay here in Rome?" he asked.

"It can help me. In Spain nobody knows me. This is the only place where I have a certain position, through being the nephew of a Cardinal. I am trying to build on that. How am I going to arrange it? I don't know. I am feeling out my future course, taking soundings."

"But the support you could find here would be all of a clerical nature," said Kennedy.

"Of course."

"But you are not Clerical!"

"No; but it is necessary for me to climb. Afterwards there will be time to change."

"You are not taking it into account, my dear Caesar, that the Church is still powerful and that it doesn't pardon people who impose upon it."

"Bah! I am not afraid of it."

"And you were just saying you are not courageous! You are courageous, my dear man. . . . After this, I don't doubt of your success."

"I need data."

"If I can furnish you with any. . . ."

"Wouldn't it be disagreeable for you to help a man who is your enemy, so far as ideas go?"

"No; because I am beginning to have some curiosity too, as to whether you will succeed in doing something. If I can be of any use, let me know."

"I will let you know."

Caesar and Kennedy took a walk about the streets, and at twilight they took leave of each other affectionately.

XIV

NEW ATTEMPTS, NEW RAMBLES

CARDINAL SPADA

"I HAVE arranged two interesting conferences for you," said Kennedy, a few days later.

"My dear man!"

"Yes; one with Cardinal Spada, the other with the Abbé Tardieu. I have spoken to them both about you."

"Splendid! What kind of people are they?"

"Cardinal Spada is a very intelligent man and a very amiable one. At heart he is a Liberal and fond of the French. As to the Abbé Tardieu, he is a very influential priest at the church of San Luigi."

After lunch they went direct to a solitary street in the old part of Rome. At the door of the big, sad palace where Cardinal Spada lived, a porter with a cocked hat, a grey great-coat, and a staff with a silver knob, was watching the few passers-by.

They went in by the broad entry-way, as far as a dark colonnaded court, paved with big flags which had grass between them.

In the middle of the court a fountain shot up a little way and fell into a stone basin covered with moss.

Kennedy and Caesar mounted the wide monumental stair-way; on the first floor a handsome glassed-in gallery ran around the court. The whole house had an air of solemnity and sadness. They entered the Cardinal's office, which was a large, sad, severe room.

Monsignor Spada was a vigorous man, despite his age. He *looked frank* and intelligent, but one guessed that there was a

hidden bitterness and desolation in him. He wore a black cassock with red edges and buttons.

Kennedy went close and was about to kneel to the Cardinal, but he prevented him.

Caesar explained his ideas to the Cardinal with modesty. He felt that this man was worthy of all his respect.

Monsignor Spada listened attentively, and then said that he understood nothing about financial matters, but that on principle he was in favour of having the administration of all the Church's property kept entirely at home, as in the time of Pius IX. Leo XIII had preferred to replace this paternal method by a trained bureaucracy, but the Church had not gained anything by it, and they had lost credit through unfortunate negotiations, buying land and taking mortgages.

Caesar realized that it was useless to attempt to convince a man of the intelligence and austerity of the Cardinal, and he listened to him respectfully.

Monsignor Spada conversed amiably, he escorted them as far as the door, and shook hands when they said good-bye.

THE ABBÉ TARDIEU

Then they went to see the Abbé Tardieu. The abbé lived in the Piazza Navona. His office, furnished in modern style, produced the effect of a violent contrast with Cardinal Spada's sumptuous study, and yet brought it to mind. The Abbé Tardieu's work-room was small, worldly, full of books and photographs.

The abbé, a tall young man, thin, with a rosy face, a long nose, and a mouth almost from ear to ear, had the air of an astute but jolly person, and laughed at everything said to him. He was liveliness personified. When they entered his office he was writing and smoking.

Caesar explained about his financial knowledge, and how he had gone on acquiring it, until he got to the point where he could discern a law, a system, in things where others saw nothing more than chance.

The Abbé Tardieu promised that if he knew a way to utilize Caesar's knowledge, he would send him word. In respect to giving him letters of introduction to influential persons in Spain, he had no objection.

They took leave of the abbé.

"All this has to go slowly," said Kennedy.

"Of course. One cannot insist that it should happen all at once."

BERNINI

"If you have nothing to do, let's take a walk," said the Englishman.

"If you like."

"Have you noticed the fountains in this square?"

"No."

"They are worth looking at."

Caesar contemplated the central obelisk. It is set on top of a rock hollowed out like a cavern, in the mouth of which a lion is seen. Afterwards they looked at the fountains at the ends of the square.

"The sculptures are by Bernini," explained Kennedy. "Bernini belonged to an epoch that has been very much abused by the critics, but nowadays he is much praised. He enchants me."

"It is rather a mixed style, don't you think?"

"Yes."

"The artist is not living?"

"For heaven's sake, man! No."

"Well, if he were alive today they would employ him to make those gewgaws some people present to leading ladies and to the deputies of their district. He would be the king of the manufacturers of ornate barometers."

"It is undeniable that Bernini had a baroque taste."

"He gives the impression of a rather pretentious and affected person."

"*Yes, he does.* He was an exuberant, luxuriant Neapolitan;

but when he chose he could produce marvels. Haven't you seen his Saint Teresa?"

"No."

"Then you must see it. Let's take a carriage."

They drove to the Piazza San Bernardo, a little square containing three churches and a fountain, and went into Santa Maria della Vittoria.

Kennedy went straight toward the high altar, and stopped to the left of it.

In an altar of the transept is to be seen a group carved in marble, representing the ecstasy of Saint Teresa. Caesar gazed at it absorbed. The saint is an attractive young girl, falling backward in a sensual spasm; her eyes are closed, her mouth open, and her jaw a bit dislocated. In front of the swooning saint is a little angel who smilingly threatens her with an arrow.

"Well, what do you think of it?" said Kennedy.

"It is wonderful," exclaimed Caesar. "But it is a bedroom scene, only the lover has slipped away."

"Yes, that is true."

"It really is pretty; you seem to see the pallor of the saint's face, the circles under her eyes, the relaxation of all her muscles. Then the angel is a little joker who stands there smiling at the ecstasy of the saint."

"Yes, that's true," said Kennedy; "it is all the more admirable for the very reason that it is tender, sensual, and charming, all at once."

"However, this sort of thing is not healthy," murmured Caesar, "this kind of vision depletes your life-force. One wants to find the same things represented in works of art that one ought to look for in life, even if they are not to be found in life."

"Good! Here enters the moralist. You talk like an Englishman," exclaimed Kennedy. "Let us go along."

"Where?"

"I have to stop in at the French Embassy a moment; then *we can go where you like.*"

They went back to the carriage, and having crossed through the centre of Rome, got out in front of the Farnese Palace.

"I will be out inside of ten minutes," said Kennedy.

The Farnese Palace aroused great admiration in Caesar; he had never passed it before. By one of the fountains in the *piazza*, he stood gazing at the huge square edifice, which seemed to him like a die cut from an immense block of stone.

"This really gives me an impression of grandeur and force," he said to himself. "What a splendid palace! It looks like an ancient knight in full armour, looking indifferently at everything, sure of his own worth."

Caesar walked from one end of the *piazza* to the other, absorbed in the majestic pile of stone.

Kennedy surprised him in his contemplation.

"Now will you say that you are a good philistine?"

"Ah, well, this palace is magnificent. Here are grandeur, strength, overwhelming force."

"Yes, it is magnificent; but very uncomfortable, my French colleagues tell me."

Kennedy related the history of the Farnese Palace to Caesar. They went through the Via del Mascherone and came out into the Via Giulia.

"This Via Giulia is a street in a provincial capital," said Kennedy; "always sad and deserted; a Cardinal or two who like isolation are still living here."

At the entrance to the Via dei Farnesi, Caesar stopped to look at two marble tablets set into the wall at the two sides of a chapel door.

Cut on the tablets were skeletons painted black; on one, the words: "Alms for the poor dead bodies found in the fields," and on the other: "Alms for the perpetual lamp in the cemetery."

"What does this mean?" said Caesar.

"That is the Church of the Orison of the Confraternity of *Death.* The tablets are modern."

They passed by the "Mascherone" again, and went rambling

on until they reached the Synagogue and the Theatre of Marcellus.

They went through narrow streets without sidewalks; they passed across tiny squares; and it seemed like a dead city, or like the outskirts of a village. In certain streets towered high dark palaces of blackish stone. These mysterious palaces looked uninhabited; the gratings were eaten with rust, all sorts of weeds grew on the roofs, and the balconies were covered with climbing plants. At corners, set into the wall, one saw niches with glass fronts. A painted madonna, black now, with silver jewels and a crown, could be guessed at inside, and in front a little lantern swung on a cord.

Suddenly a cart would come down one of these narrow streets without sidewalks, driving very quickly and scattering the women and children seated by the gutter.

In all these poor quarters there were lanes crossed by ropes loaded with torn washing; there were wretched black shops from which an odour of grease exhaled; there were narrow streets with mounds of garbage in the middle. In the very palaces, now shorn of their grandeur, appeared the same decoration of rags waving in the breeze. In the Theatre of Marcellus one's gaze got lost in the depths of black caves, where smiths stood out against flames.

This mixture of sumptuousness and squalor, of beauty and ugliness, was reflected in the people; young and most beautiful women were side by side with fat, filthy old ones covered with rags, their eyes gloomy, and of a type that recalled old African Jewesses.

——— *WHAT CAN BE READ ON WALLS*

Caesar and Kennedy went on toward the Temple of Vesta and followed the river bank until the Tiber Embankment ended.

Here the banks were green and the river clearer and more poetic. To the left rose the Aventine with its villas; in the harbour two or three tugs were tied up; and here and there along *the pier stood* a crane.

Evening was falling and the sky was filling with pink clouds.

They sat down awhile on the side of the road, and Caesar entertained himself deciphering the inscriptions written in charcoal on a mud-wall.

"Do you go in for modern epigraphy?" asked Kennedy.

"Yes. It is one of the things I take pleasure in reading, in the towns I go to; the advertisements in the newspapers and the writings on the wall."

"It's a good kind of curiosity."

"Yes, I believe one learns more about the real life in a town from such inscriptions than from the guide- and text-books."

"That's possible. And what conclusions have you drawn from your observations?"

"They are not of much value. I haven't constructed a science of wall-inscriptions, as that fake Lambroso would have done."

"But you will construct it surely, when you have lighted on the underlying system."

"You think my epigraphical science is on the same level as my financial science. What a mistake!"

"All right. But tell me what you have discovered about different towns."

"London, for instance, I have found, is childish in its inscriptions and somewhat clownish. When some sentimental foolishness doesn't occur to a Londoner of the people, some brutality or rough joke occurs to him."

"You are very kind," said Kennedy, laughing.

"Paris has a vulgar, cruel taste; in the Frenchman of the people you find the tiger alternating with the monkey. There the dominant note on the walls is the patriotic note, insults to politicians, calling them assassins and thieves, and also sentiments of revenge expressed by an '*A mort Dupin!*' or '*A mort Duval!*' Moreover, there is a great enthusiasm for the guillotine."

"*And Madrid?*"

"*Madrid is* at heart a rude, moral town with little imagina-

tion, and the epigraphs on the walls and benches are primitive."

"And in Rome what do you find?"

"Here one finds a mixture of pornography, romanticism, and politics. A heart pierced by an arrow and poetic phrases, alternate with some enormous piece of filthiness and with hurrahs for Anarchy or for the '*Papa-re.*'"

"Well done!" said Kennedy; "I can see that the branch of epigraphy you practise amounts to something. It should be systematized and given a name."

"What do you think we should name it? Wallography?"

"Very good."

"And one of these fine days we can systematize it. Now we might go and get dinner."

They took a tram which was coming back from St. Paul's beyond the Walls, and returned to the heart of the city.

THE MONK WITH THE RED NOSE

The next day Caesar was finishing dressing when the servant told him that a gentleman was waiting for him.

"Who is it?" asked Caesar.

"It's a monk."

Caesar went to the salon and there found a tall monk with an evil face, a red nose, and a worn habit.

Caesar recalled having seen him, but didn't know where.

"What can I do for you?" asked Caesar.

"I come from His Eminence, Cardinal Fort. I must speak with you."

"Let's go into the dining-room. We shall be alone there."

"It would be better to talk in your room."

"No, there is no one here. Besides, I have to eat breakfast. Will you join me?"

"No, thanks," said the monk.

Caesar remembered having seen that face in the Altemps palace. He was doubtless one of the domestic monks who had been with the Abbé Preciozi.

The waiter came bringing Caesar's breakfast.

"Will you tell me what it is?" said Caesar to the ecclesiastic, while he filled his cup.

The monk waited until the waiter was gone, and then said in a hard voice:

"His Eminence the Cardinal sent me to bid you not to present yourself anywhere again, giving his name."

"What? What does this mean?" asked Caesar, calmly.

"It means that His Eminence has found out about your intrigues and machinations."

"Intrigues? What intrigues were those?"

"You know perfectly well. And His Eminence forbids you to continue in that direction."

"His Eminence forbids me to pay calls? And for what reason?"

"Because you have used his name to introduce yourself into certain places."

"It is not true."

"You have told people you went to that you are Cardinal Fort's nephew."

"And I am not?" asked Caesar, after taking a swallow of coffee.

"You are trying to make use of the relationship, we don't know with what end in view."

"I am trying to make use of my relationship to Cardinal Fort? Why shouldn't I?"

"You admit it?"

"Yes, I admit it. People are such imbeciles that they think it is an honour to have a Cardinal in the family; I take advantage of this stupid idea, although I do not share it, because for me a Cardinal is merely an object of curiosity, an object for an archeological museum. . . ."

Caesar paused, because the monk's countenance was growing dark. In the twilight of his pallid face, his nose looked like a comet portending some public calamity.

"Poor wretch!" murmured the monk. "You do not know *what you are saying.* You are blaspheming. You are offending *God.*"

"Do you really believe that God has any relation to my uncle?" asked Caesar, paying more attention to his toast than to his visitor.

And then he added:

"The truth is that it would be extravagant behaviour on the part of God."

The monk looked at Caesar with terrible eyes. Those grey eyes of his, under their long, black, thick brows, shot lightning.

"Poor wretch!" repeated the monk. "You ought to have more respect for things above you."

Caesar arose.

"You are bothering me and preventing me from drinking my coffee," he said, with exquisite politeness, and touched the bell.

"Be careful!" exclaimed the monk, seizing Caesar's arm with violence.

"Don't you touch me again," said Caesar, pulling away violently, his face pale and his eyes flashing. "If you do, I have a revolver here with five chambers, and I shall take pleasure in emptying them one by one, taking that lighthouse you carry about for a nose, as my target."

"Fire it if you dare."

Fortunately the waiter had come in on hearing the bell.

"Do you wish anything, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, please escort this clerical gentleman to the door, and tell him on the way not to come back here."

Days later Caesar found out that there had been a great disturbance at the Altemps palace in consequence of the calls he had made. Preciozi had been punished and sent away from Rome, and the various Spanish monasteries and colleges warned not to receive Caesar.

XV

GIOVANNI BATTISTA, PAGAN

"MY dear Caesar," said Kennedy, "I believe it will be very difficult for you to find what you want by looking for it. You ought to leave it a little to chance."

"Abandon myself to events as they arrive? All right, it seems a good idea."

"Then if you find something practicable, utilize it."

Kennedy took his friend to a statue-shop where he used to pass some of his hours. The shop was in a lane near the Forum, and its stock was in antiques, majolicas, and plaster casts of pagan gods.

The shop was dark and rather gloomy, with a small court at the back covered with vines. The proprietor was an old man, with a moustache, an imperial, and a shock of white hair. His name was Giovanni Battista Lanza. He professed revolutionary ideas and had great enthusiasm about Mazzini. He expressed himself in an ironical and malicious manner.

Signora Vittoria, his wife, was a grumbling old woman, rather devoted to wine. She spoke like a Roman of the lowest class, was olive-coloured and wrinkled, and of her former beauty there remained only her very black eyes and hair that was still black.

The daughter, Simonetta, a girl who resembled her father, blond, with the build of a goddess, was the one that waited on customers and kept the accounts.

Simonetta, being the manager, divided up the profits; the *elder son* was head of the workshop and he made the most *money; then* came two workmen from outside; and then the

father who still got his day's wages, out of consideration for his age; and finally the younger son, twelve or fourteen years old, who was an apprentice.

Simonetta gave her mother what was indispensable for household expenses and managed the rest herself.

Kennedy retailed this information the first day they went to Giovanni Battista Lanza's house. Caesar could see Simonetta keeping the books, while the small brother, in a white blouse that came to his heels, was chasing a dog, holding a pipe in his hand by the thick part, as if it were a pistol, the dog barking and hanging on to the blouse, the small boy shrieking and laughing, when Signora Vittoria came bawling out.

Kennedy presented Simonetta to his friend Caesar, and she smiled and gave her hand.

"Is Signore Giovanni Battista here?" Kennedy asked Signora Vittoria.

"Yes, he is in the court." she answered in her gloomy way.

"Is something wrong with your mamma?" said Kennedy to Simonetta.

"Nothing."

They went into the court and Giovanni Battista arose, very dignified, and bowed to Caesar. The elder son and the two workmen in white blouses and paper caps were busy with water and wires, cleaning a plaster mould they had just emptied.

The mould was a big bas-relief of the Way of the Cross. Giovanni Battista permitted himself various jocose remarks about the Way of the Cross, which his son and the other two workmen heard with great indifference; but while he was still emptying his store of anti-Christian irony, the voice of Signora Vittoria was heard, crying domineeringly:

"Giovanni Battista!"

"What is it?"

"That's enough, that's enough! I can hear you from here."

"That's my wife," said Giovanni Battista, "she doesn't like *me to be lacking* in respect for plaster saints."

"You are a pagan!" screamed the old woman. "You shall see, you shall see what will happen to you."

"What do you expect to have happen to me, darling?"

"Leave her alone," exclaimed the elder son, ill at ease; "you always have to be making mother fly into a rage."

"No, my boy, no; she is the one who makes me fly into a rage."

"Giovanni Battista is used to living among gods," said Kennedy, "and he despises saints."

"No, no," replied the cast-maker; "some saints are all right. If all the churches had figures by Donatello or Robbia, I would go to church oftener; but to go and look at those statues in the Jesuit churches, those figures with their arms spread and their eyes rolling. . . . Oh, no! I cannot look at such things."

Caesar could see that Giovanni Battista expressed himself very well; but that he was not precisely a star when it came to working. After the mould for the bas-relief was cleaned and fixed, the cast-maker invited Caesar and Kennedy to have a glass of wine in a wine-shop near by.

"How's this, are you leaving already, father?" said Simonetta, as he went through the shop to get to the street.

"I'm coming back, I'm coming back right away."

SUPERSTITIONS

The three of them went to a rather dirty tavern in the same lane, and settled themselves by the window. This post was a good point of observation for that narrow street, so crowded and so picturesque.

Workmen went by, and itinerant vendors, women with kerchiefs, half head-dress and half muffler, and with black eyes and expressive faces. Opposite was a booth of coloured candies, dried figs strung on a reed, and various kinds of *sweets.*

A wine-cart passed, and Kennedy made Caesar observe how

decorative it was with its big arm-seat in the middle and its hood above, like a prompter's box.

Giovanni Battista ordered a flask of wine for the three of them. While he chatted and drank, friends of his came to greet them. They were men with beards, long hair, and soft hats, of the Garbaldi and Verdi type so abundant in Italy.

Among them were two serious old men; one was a model, a native of Frascati, with the face of a venerable apostle; the other, for contrast, looked like a buffoon and was the possessor of a grotesque nose, long, thin at the end and adorned with a red wart.

"My wife has a deadly hatred for all of them," said Giovanni Battista, laughing.

"And why so?" asked Caesar.

"Because we talk politics and sometimes they ask me for a few pennies. . . ."

"Your wife must have a lively temper, . . ." said Caesar.

"Yes, an unhappy disposition; good, awfully good; but very superstitious. Christianity has produced nothing but superstitions."

"Giovanni Battista is a pagan, as his wife well says," asserted Kennedy.

"What superstitions has your wife?" asked Caesar.

"All of them. Romans are very superstitious and my wife is a Roman. If you see a hunchback, it is good luck; if you see three, then your luck is magnificent and you have to swallow your saliva three times; on the other hand, if you see a humpbacked woman it is a bad omen and you must spit on the ground to keep away the *jettatura*. Three priests together is a very good sign. We ought all to get along very well in Rome, because we see three and up to thirty priests together."

"A spider is also very significant," said Kennedy; "in the morning it is of bad augury, and in the evening good."

"And at noon?" asked Caesar.

"At noon," answered Lanza, laughing, "it means nothing to speak of. But if you wish to make sure whether it is a

good auspice or a bad, you kill the spider and count its legs. If they are an even number, it is a good omen; if uneven, bad."

"But I believe spiders always have an even number of legs," said Caesar.

"Certainly," responded the old man; "but my wife swears they do not; that she has seen many with seven and nine legs. It is religious unreasonableness."

"Are there many people like that, so credulous?" asked Caesar.

"Oh, lots," replied Lanza; "in the shops you will find amulets, horns, hands made of coral or horseshoes, all to keep away bad luck. My wife and the neighbour women play the lottery, by combining the numbers of their birthdays, and the ages of their fathers, their mothers, and their children. When some relative dies, they make a magic combination of the dates of birth and death, the day and the month, and buy a lottery ticket. They never win; and instead of realizing that their systems are of no avail, they say that they omitted to count in the number of letters in the name or something of that sort. It is comical, so much religion and so much superstition."

"But you confuse religion and superstition, my friend," said Kennedy.

"It's all the same," answered the old man, smiling his suavely ironical smile. "There is nothing except Nature."

"You do not believe in miracles, Giovanni Battista?" asked the Englishman.

"Yes, I believe in the earth's miracles, making trees and flowers grow, and the miracle of children's being born from their mothers. The other miracles I do not believe in. What for? They are so insignificant beside the works of Nature!"

"He is a pagan," Kennedy again stated.

YOUNG PAINTERS

They were chatting, when three young lads came into the *tavern,* all three having the air of artists, black clothes, soft *hats, flowing* cravats, long hair, and pipes.

"Two of them are fellow-countrymen of yours," Kennedy told Caesar.

"They are Spanish painters," the old man added. "The other is a sculptor who has been in the Argentine, and he talks Spanish too."

The three entered and sat down at the same table and were introduced to Caesar. Everybody chattered. Buonacossi, the Italian, was a real type. Of very low stature, he had a giant's torso and strong little legs. His head was like a woe-begone eagle, his nose hooked, thin, and reddish, eyes round, and hair black.

Buonacossi proved to be gay, exuberant, changeable, and full of vehemence.

He explained his artistic ideas with picturesque warmth, mingling them with blasphemies and curses. Things struck him as the best or the worst in the world. For him there doubtless were no middle terms.

One of the two Spaniards was serious, grave, jaundiced, sour-visaged, and named Cortés; the other, large, ordinary, fleshy, and coarse, seemed rather a bully.

Giovanni Battista was not able to be long outside the workshop, no doubt because his conscience troubled him, and though with difficulty, he got up and left. Kennedy, Caesar, and the two Spaniards went toward the Piazza del Campidoglio, and Buonacossi marched off in the opposite direction.

On reaching the Via Nazionale, Kennedy took his leave and Caesar remained with the two Spaniards. The red, fleshy one, who had the air of a bully, started in to make fun of the Italians, and to mimic their bows and salutes; then he said that he had an engagement with a woman and made haste to take his leave.

When he had gone, the grave Spaniard with the sour face, said to Caesar:

"That chap is like the dandies here; that's why he imitates them so well."

Afterwards Cortés talked about his studies in painting; he didn't get on well, he had no money, and anyway Rome didn't

please him at all. Everything seemed wrong to him, absurd, ridiculous.

Caesar, after he had said good-bye to him, murmured:

"The truth is that we Spaniards are impossible people."

XVI

THE PORTRAIT OF A POPE

TWO or three days later Caesar met the Spaniard Cortés in the Piazza Colonna. They bowed. The thin, sour-looking painter was walking with a beardless young German, red and snub-nosed. This young man was a painter too, Cortés said; he wore a green hat with a cock's feather, a blue cape, thick eyeglasses, big boots, and had a certain air of being a blond Chinaman.

"Would you like to come to the Doria gallery with us?" asked Cortés.

"What is there to see there?"

"A stupendous portrait by Velázquez."

"I warn you that I know nothing about pictures."

"Nobody does," Cortés declared roundly. "Everybody says what he thinks."

"Is the gallery near here?"

"Yes, just a step."

In company with Cortés and the German with the green hat with the cock's feather, Caesar went to the Piazza del Collegio Romano, where the Doria palace is. They saw a lot of pictures which didn't seem any better to Caesar than those in the antique shops and the pawnbrokers', but which drew learned commentaries from the German. Then Cortés took them to a cabinet hung in green and lighted by a skylight. There was nothing to be seen in the cabinet except the portrait of the Pope. In order that people might look at it comfortably, a sofa had been installed facing it.

"Is this the Velázquez portrait?" asked Caesar.

"This is it."

Caesar looked at it carefully.

"That man had eaten and drunk well before his portrait was painted," said Caesar; "his face is congested."

"It is extraordinary!" exclaimed Cortés. "It is something to see, the way this is done. What boldness! Everything is red, the cape, the cap, the curtains in the background. . . . What a man!"

The German aired his opinions in his own language, and took out a notebook and pencil and wrote some notes.

"What sort of man was this?" asked Caesar, whom the technical side of painting did not preoccupy, as it did Cortés.

"They say he was a dull man, who lived under a woman's domination."

"The great thing is," murmured Caesar, "how the painter has left him here alive. It seems as if we had come in here to salute him, and he was waiting for us to speak. Those clear eyes are questioning us. It is curious."

"Not curious," exclaimed Cortés, "but admirable."

"For me it is more curious than admirable. There is something brutal in this Pope; through his grey beard, which is so thin, you can see his projecting chin. The good gentleman was of a marked prognathism, a type of degeneration, indifference, intellectual torpor, and nevertheless, he reached the top. Perhaps in the Church it's the same as in water, only corks float."

LEGEND AND HISTORY

Caesar went out of the cabinet, leaving the German and Cortés seated on the sofa, absorbed in the picture; he looked at various paintings in the gallery, went back, and sat down beside the artists.

"This portrait," he said presently, "is like history by the side of legend. All the other paintings in the gallery are legend, 'folk-lore,' as I believe one calls it. This one is history."

"That's what it is. It is truth," agreed Cortés.

"Yes, but there are people who do not like the truth, my *friend.* I tell you: this is a man of flesh, somewhat enigmatic, *like nature herself,* and with arteries in which blood flows;

this is a man who breathes and digests, and not merely a pleasant abstraction; you, who understand such things, will tell me that the drawing is perfect, and the colour such as it was in reality; but how about the person who doesn't ask for reality?"

"Stendhal, the writer, was affected that way by this picture," said Cortés; "he was shocked at its being hung among masterpieces."

"He found it bad, no doubt."

"Very bad?"

"Was this Stendhal English?"

"No, French."

"Ah, then, you needn't be surprised. A Frenchman has no obligation to understand anything that's not French."

"Nevertheless he was an intelligent man."

"Did he perhaps have a good deal of veneration?"

"No, he boasted of not having any."

"Doubtless he did have without suspecting it. With a man who had no veneration, what difference would it make whether there was one bad thing among a lot of good ones?"

The German with the green hat, who understood something of the conversation, was indignant at Caesar's irreverent ideas. He asked him if he understood Latin, and Caesar told him no, and then, in a strange gibberish, half Latin and half Italian, he let loose a series of facts, dates, and numbers. Then he asserted that all artistic things of great merit were German: Greece, Rome, Gothic architecture, the Italian Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci, Velázquez, all German.

The snub-nosed young person, with his cape and his green hat with its cock-feather, did not let a mouse escape from his German mouse-trap.

The data of the befeathered German were too much for Caesar, and he took his leave of the painters.

XVII

EVIL DAYS

ACCOMPANIED by Kennedy, Caesar called repeatedly on the most auspicious members of the French clerical element living in Rome, and found persons more cultivated than among the rough Spanish monks; but, as was natural, nobody gave him any useful information offering the possibility of his putting his financial talents to the proof.

"Something must turn up," he used to say to himself, "and at the least opening we will dive into the work."

Caesar kept gathering notes about people who had connections in Spain with the Black party in Rome; he called several times on Father Herreros, despite his uncle's prohibition, and succeeded in getting the monk to write to the Marquesa de Montsagro, asking if there were no means of making Caesar Moncada, Cardinal Fort's nephew, Conservative Deputy for her district.

The Marquesa wrote back that it was impossible; the Conservative Deputy for the district was very popular and a man with large properties there.

When Holy Week was over, Laura and the Countess Brenda and her daughter decided to spend a while at Florence, and invited Caesar to accompany them; but he was quite out of harmony with the Brenda lady, and said that he had to stay on in Rome.

A few days later Mme. Dawson and her daughters left, and the San Martinos and the Marchesa Sciacca; and an avalanche of English people and Germans, armed with their red Baedekers, took the hotel by storm. Susanna Marchmont had gone to spend some days at Corfu.

In less than a week Caesar remained alone, knowing nobody

in the hotel, and despite his believing that he was going to be perfectly indifferent about this, he felt deserted and sad. The influence of the springtime also affected him. The deep blue sky, cloudless, dense, dark, made him languish. Instead of entertaining himself with something or other, he did scarcely anything all day long but walk.

TWO ABSURD MEN

"I have continually near me in the hotel," wrote Caesar to Alzugaray, "two absurd fellows: one is one of those stout red Germans with a square head; the other a fine slim Norwegian. The German, who is a captain in some service or other, is a restless man, always busy about what the devil I don't know. He is constantly carrying about trunks and boxes, with the aid of a sorrowful valet, dressed in black, who appears to detest his position. The captain must devote the morning to doing gymnastics, for I hear him from my room, which is next to his, jumping and dropping weights on the floor, each of which must weigh half a ton, to judge by the noise they make.

"He does all this to vocal commands, and when some feat doesn't go right he reprimands himself.

"This German isn't still a moment; he opens the salon door, crosses the room, stands at the window, takes up a paper, puts it down. He is a type that makes me nervous.

"The Norwegian at first appeared to be a reasonable man, somewhat sullen. He looked frowningly at me, and I watched him equally frowningly, and took him for a thinker, an Ibsenite whose imagination was lost among the ice of his own country. Now and then I would see him walking up and down the corridor, rubbing his hands together so continuously and so frantically that they made a noise like bones.

"Suddenly, this gentleman is transformed as if by magic; he begins to joke with the servants, he seizes a chair and dances with it, and the other day I saw him alone in the salon marching around with a paper hat on his head, like children playing *soldiers, and blowing* on a cornet, also made of paper.

"I stared at him in amazement, he smiled like a child, and asked if he was disturbing me.

"'No, no, not in the least,' I told him.

"I have asked in the hotel if this man is crazy, and they have told me that he is not, but is a professor, a man of science, who is known to have these strange fits of gaiety.

"Another of the Norwegian's doings has been to compose a serenade, with a vulgar melody that would disgust you, and which he has dedicated '*A la bella Italia.*' He wrote the Italian words himself, but as he knows no music, he had a pianist come here and write out his serenade. What he especially wants is that it should be full of sentiment; and so the pianist arranged it with directions and many pauses, which satisfied the Norwegian. Almost every night the serenade '*A la bella Italia*' is sung. Somebody who wants to amuse himself goes to the piano, the Norwegian strikes a languid attitude and chants his serenade. Sometimes he goes in front of the piano, sometimes behind, but invariably he hears the storm of applause when it ends, and he bows with great gusto.

"I don't know whether it's the other people who are laughing at him, or he who is laughing at the others.

"The other day he said to me in his macaronic Italian:

"'Mr. Spaniard, I have good eyesight, good hearing, a good sense of smell, and . . . lots of sentiment.'

"I didn't exactly understand what he meant me to think, and I didn't pay any attention to him.

"It seems that the Norwegian is going away soon, and as the day of his departure approaches, he grows funereal."

THE SADNESS OF LIFE

"I don't know why I don't go away," Caesar wrote to his friend another time. "When I go out in the evening and see the ochre-coloured houses on both sides and the blue sky above, a horrible sadness takes me. These spring days oppress me, *make me want* to weep; it seems to me it would be better to be *dead, leaving* no tomb or name or other ridiculous and disagree-

able thing, but disappearing into the air or the sea. It doesn't seem natural; but I have never been so happy as one time when I was in Paris sick, alone and with a fever. I was in an hotel room and my window looked into the garden of a fine house, where I could see the tops of the trees; and I transformed them into a virgin forest, wherein marvellous adventures happened to me.

"Since then I have often thought that things are probably neither good nor bad, neither sad nor happy, in themselves; he who has sound, normal nerves, and a brain equally sound, reflects the things around him like a good mirror, and feels with comfort the impression of his conformity to nature; nowadays we who have nerves all upset and brains probably upset too, form deceptive reflections. And so, that time in Paris, sick and shut in, I was happy; and here, sound and strong, when toward nightfall, I look at the splendid skies, the palaces, the yellow walls that take an extraordinary tone, I feel that I am one of the most miserable men on the planet. . . ."

ONE SUNDAY AFTERNOON

His lack of tranquillity led Caesar to make absurd resolutions which he didn't carry out.

One Sunday in the beginning of April, he went out into the street, disposed to take a walk outside of Rome, following the road anywhere it led. A hard, fine rain was falling, the sky was grey, the air mild, the streets were full of puddles, the shops closed; a few flower merchants were offering branches of almond in blossom.

Caesar was very depressed. He went into a church to get out of the rain. The church was full; there were many people in the centre of it; he didn't know what they were doing. Doubtless they were gathered there for some reason, although Caesar didn't understand what. Caesar sat down on a bench, worn out; he would have liked to listen to organ music, to a boy choir. No ideas occurred to him but sentimental ones. Some time passed, and a priest began to preach.

Caesar got up and went into the street.

"I must get rid of these miserable impressions, get back to noble ideas. I must fight this sentimental leprosy."

He started to walk with long strides through the sad, empty streets.

He went toward the river and met Kennedy, who was coming back, he told him, from the studio of a sculptor friend of his.

"You look like desolation. What has happened to you?"

"Nothing, but I am in a perfectly hellish humour."

"I am melancholy too. It must be the weather. Let's take a walk."

They went along the bank of the Tiber. Full of clay, more turbid than ever, and very high between the white embankments hemming it in, the river looked like a big sewer.

"This is not the '*coeruleus Tibris*' that Virgil speaks of in the *Æneid,* which presented itself to Æneas in the form of an ancient man with his head crowned with roses," said Kennedy.

"No. This is a horrible river," Caesar opined.

They followed the shore, passed the Castel Sant' Angelo and the bridge with the statues.

From the embankment, to the right, they could now see narrow lanes, sunk almost below the level of the river. On the other bank a new, white edifice towered in the rain.

They went as far as the Piazza d'Armi, and then came back at nightfall to Rome. The rain was gradually ceasing and the sky looked less threatening. A file of greenish gaslights followed the river-wall and then crossed over the bridge.

They walked to the Piazza del Popolo and through the Via Babuino to the Piazza di Spagna.

"Would you like to go to a Benedictine abbey tomorrow?" asked Kennedy.

"All right."

"And if you are still melancholy, we will leave you there."

THE ABBEY

The next day, after lunch, Kennedy and Caesar went to visit *the abbey of* Sant' Anselmo on the Aventine. The abbot, Hilde-

brand, was a friend of Kennedy's, and like him an Englishman.

They took a carriage and Kennedy told it to stop at the church of Santa Sabina.

"It is still too early to go to the abbey. Let us look at this church, which is the best preserved of all the old Roman ones."

They entered the church; but it was so cold there that Caesar went out again directly and waited in the porch. There was a man there selling rosaries and photographs who spoke scarcely any Italian or French, but did speak Spanish. Probably he was a Jew.

Caesar asked him where they manufactured those religious toys, and the pedlar told him in Westphalia.

Kennedy went to look at a picture by Sassoferrato, which is in one of the chapels, and meanwhile the rosary-seller showed the church door to Caesar and explained the different bas-reliefs, cut in cypress wood by Greek artists of the V Century, and representing scenes from the Old and New Testaments.

Kennedy came back, they got into the carriage again, and they drove to the Benedictine abbey.

"Is the abbot Hildebrandus here?" asked Kennedy.

Out came the abbot, a man of about fifty, with a gold cross on his breast. They exchanged a few friendly words, and the superior showed them the convent.

The refectory was clean and very spacious; the long table of shining wood; the floor made of mosaic. The crypt held a statue, which Caesar assumed must be of Sant' Anselmo. The church was severe, without ornaments, without pictures; it had a primitive air, with its columns of fine granite that looked like marble. A monk was playing the harmonium, and in the opaque veiled light, the thin music gave a strange impression of something quite outside this life.

Afterwards they crossed a large court with palm-trees. They went up to the second story, and down a corridor with cells, each of which had on the lintel the name of the patron saint of the respective monk. Each door had a card with the name of the occupant of the room.

It looked more like a bath-house than a monastery. The

cells were comfortable inside, without any air of sadness; each held a bed, a divan, and a small bookcase.

By a window at the end of the passage, one could see, far away, the Alban Hills, looking like a blue mountain-range, half hidden in white haze, and nearby one could see the trees in the Protestant cemetery and the pyramid of Caïus Cestius close to them.

Caesar felt a sort of deep repugnance for the people shut up here, remote from life and protected from it by a lot of things.

"The man who is playing the harmonium in this church with its opaque light, is a coward," he said to himself. "One must live and struggle in the open air, among men, in the midst of their passions and hatreds, even though one's miserable nerves quiver and tremble."

After showing them the monastery, the abbot Hildebrand took them to his study, where he worked at revising ancient translations of the Bible. He had photographic copies of all the Latin texts and he was collating them with the original.

They talked of the progress of the Church, and the abbot commented with some contempt on the worldly success of the Jesuit churches, with their saints who serve as well to get husbands and rich wives as to bring winning numbers in the lottery.

Before going out, they went to a window, at the other end of the corridor from where they had looked out before. Below them they could see the Tiber as far as the Ripa harbour; opposite, the heights of the Janiculum, and further, Saint Peter's.

When they went out, Kennedy said to Caesar:

"What devilish effect has the abbey produced in you, that you are so much gayer than when we went in?"

"It has confirmed me in my idea, which I had lost for a few days."

"What idea is that?"

"That we must not defend ourselves in this life, but attack, always attack."

"And now you are contented at having found it again?"

"*Yes.*"

"I am glad, because you have such a pitiable air when you are sad. Would you like to go to the Priory of Malta, which is only a step from here?"

"Good."

They went down in the carriage to the Priory of Malta. They knocked at the gate and a woman came out who knew Kennedy, and who told them to wait a moment and she would open the church.

"Here," said Kennedy, "you have all that remains of the famous Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. That anti-historic man Bonaparte rooted it out of Malta. The Order attempted to establish itself in Catania, and afterwards at Ferrara, and finally took refuge here. Now it has no property left, and all that remains are its memories and its archives."

"That is how our descendants will see our Holy Mother the Church. In Chicago or Boston some traveller will find an abandoned chapel, and will ask: 'What is this?' And they will tell him: 'This is what remains of the Catholic Church.'"

"Don't talk like an Homais," said Kennedy.

"I don't know who Homais is," retorted Caesar.

"An atheistical druggist in Flaubert's novel, *Madame Bovary*. Haven't you read it?"

"Yes; I have a vague idea that I have read it. A very heavy thing; yes, . . . I think I have read it."

The woman opened the door and they went into the church. It was small, overcharged with ornaments. They saw the tomb of Bishop Spinelli and Giotto's Virgin, and then went into a hall gay with red flags with a white cross, on whose walls they could read the names of the Grand Masters of the Order of Malta. The majority of the names were French and Polish. Two or three were Spanish, and among them that of Caesar Borgia.

"Your countryman and namesake was also a Grand Master of Malta," said Kennedy.

"*So it seems,*" replied Caesar with indifference.

"I see that you speak with contempt of that extraordinary man. Is he not congenial to you?"

"The fact is I don't know his history."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

"How strange! We must go tomorrow to the Borgia Apartment in the Vatican."

"Good."

They saw the model of an ancient galley which was in the same hall, and went out through the church into the garden planned by Piranesi. The woman showed them a very old palm, with a hole in it made by a hand-grenade in the year '49. It had remained that way more than half a century, and it was only a few days since the trunk of the palm had broken.

From the garden they went, by a path between trees, to the bastion of Paul III, a little terrace, from which they could see the Tiber at their feet, and opposite the panorama of Rome and its environs, in the light of a beautiful spring sunshine. . . .

XVIII

CAESAR BORGIA'S MOTTO, "AUT CÆSAR, AUT NIHIL"

THE BORGIAS

THE next day was one of the days for visiting the Borgia Apartment. Caesar and Kennedy met in the Piazza di San Pietro, went into the Vatican museum, and walked by a series of stairs and passageways to the Gallery of Inscriptions.

Then they went down to a hall, at whose door there were guards dressed in slashed clothes, which were parti-coloured, red, yellow, and black. Some of them carried lances and others swords.

"Why are the guards here dressed differently?" asked Caesar.

"Because this belongs to the Dominions of the Pope."

"And what kind of guards are these?"

"These are pontifical Swiss guards."

"They look comic-opera enough," said Caesar.

"My dear man, don't say that. This costume was designed by no one less than Michelangelo."

"All right. At that time they probably looked very well, but now they have a theatrical effect."

"It is because you have no veneration. If you were reverential, they would look wonderful to you."

"Very well, let us wait and see whether reverence will not spring up in me. Now, you go on and explain what there is here."

"This first room, the Hall of Audience, or of the Popes, does not contain anything notable, as you see," said Kennedy; "the five we are coming to later, have been restored, but are still the same as at the time when your countryman Alexander VI was

Pope. All five were decorated by Pinturicchio and his pupils, and all with reference to the Borgias. The Borgias have their history, not well known in all its details, and their legend, which is more extensive and more picturesque. Really, it is not easy to distinguish one from the other."

"Let's have the history and the legend mixed."

"I will give you a résumé in a few words. Alfonso Borja was a Valencian, born at Játiba; he was secretary to the King or Aragon; then Bishop of Valencia, later Cardinal, and lastly Pope, by the name of Calixtus III. While Calixtus lives, the Spaniards are all-powerful in Rome. Calixtus protects his nephews, sons of his sister Isabel and a Valencian named Lanzol or Lenzol. These nephews drop their original name and take their mother's, Italianizing its spelling to Borgia. Their uncle, the Pope, appoints the elder, Don Pedro Luis, Captain of the Church; the second, Don Rodríguez. . . ."

"Don Rodríguez?" said Caesar. "In Spanish you can't say Don Rodríguez."

"Gregorovius calls him that."

"Then Gregorovius, no doubt, knew no Spanish."

"In Latin he is called Rodericus."

"Then it should be Don Rodrigo."

"All right, Rodrigo. Well, this Don Rodrigo, also from Játiba, his uncle makes a Cardinal, and at the death of Pedro Luis, he calls him to Rome. Rodrigo has had several children before becoming a Cardinal, and apparently he feels no great enthusiasm for ecclesiastical dignities; but when he finds himself in Rome, the ambition to be Pope assails him, and at the death of Innocent VIII, he buys the tiara? Is it legend or history that he bought the tiara? That is not clear. Now we will go in and see the portrait of Rodrigo Borgia, who in the series of Popes, bears the name Alexander VI."

ALEXANDER VI AND HIS BROTHER

Kennedy and Caesar entered the first room, the Hall of the Mysteries, and the Englishman stopped in front of a picture of *the Resurrection.*

"Here you have Alexander VI, on his knees, adoring Christ who is leaving the tomb. He is the type of a Southerner; he has a hooked nose, a long head, tonsured, a narrow forehead, thick lips, a heavy beard, a strong neck, and small chubby hands. He wears a papal robe of gold, covered with jewels; the tiara is on the ground beside him. Of the soldiers, it is supposed that the one asleep by the sepulchre and the one who is waking and rising up, pulling himself to his knees by the aid of his lance, are two of the Pope's sons, Caesar and the Duke of Gandia. I rather believe that the little soldier with the lance is a woman, perhaps Lucrezia. How does your countryman strike you, my friend?"

"He is of Mediterranean race, a dolichocephalic Iberian; he has the small melon-shaped head, the sensual features. He is leptorrhine. He comes of an intriguing, commercial, lying, and charlatan race."

"To which you have the honour to belong," said Kennedy, laughing.

"Certainly."

"They say this man was a great enthusiast about his countrymen and the customs of his country. These tiles, which are remains of the original floor, and the plates you see here, are Valencian. A Spanish painter told me that several letters of Alexander VI's are preserved in the archives of the cathedral at Valencia, one among them asking to have tiles sent."

Kennedy walked forward a little and planted himself before an Assumption of the Virgin, and said:

"It is supposed that this gloomy man dressed in red, with a little fringe of hair on his brow, is a brother of the Pope's."

"A bad type to encounter in the Tribunal of the Inquisition," said Caesar; "imagine what this red-robed fellow would have done with that Jew at the Excelsior, Señor Pereira, if he had happened to have him in his power."

"In the soffits," Kennedy went on, "as you see, are repetitions of the symbols of Iris, Osiris, and the bull Apis, doubtless because of their resemblance to the Christian symbols, and also *because the bull* Apis recalls the bull in the Borgia arms."

"Their arms were a bull?"

"Yes; it was a 'scutcheon invented by some king-at-arms or other, a symbol of ferocity and strength."

"Were they of a noble family, these Borgias?"

"No, probably not. Though I believe some people suppose that they were descended from the Aragonese family of Atarés. Now that we know Alexander VI, let us take a glance at his court. It has often been said, and is no doubt taken from Vasari's book, that in the Borgia Apartment Pinturicchio painted Pope Alexander VI adoring the Virgin represented under the likeness of his beloved, Julia Farnese. The critic must have been confused, because none of these madonnas recalls the face of *Giulia la bella,* whom people used to call the Bride of Christ. The picture that Vasari refers to must be one in the museum at Valencia."

THE HALL OF THE SAINTS

They went into another room, the Hall of the Saints, and Kennedy took Caesar in front of the fresco called, *The Dispute of Saint Catherine with the Emperor Maximian.*

"The place of this scene," said Kennedy, "Pinturicchio has set in front of the Arch of Constantine. The artist has added the inscription *Pacis Cultori,* and below he has embossed the Borgia bull. The subject is the discussion between the Emperor and the saint. Maximian, seated on a throne under a canopy, is listening to Saint Catherine, who counts on her fingers the arguments she has been using in the dispute. Who was it served as model for the figure of Maximian? At first they imagined it was Caesar Borgia; but as you may observe, the appearance of the Emperor is that of a man of twenty odd years, and when Pinturicchio painted this, Caesar was about seventeen. So it is more logical to suppose that the model must have been the Pope's eldest son, the Duke of Gandia. A chronicler of the period says that this Duke of Gandia was good among the great, as his brother Caesar was great among the wicked. Also, legend or history, whichever it be, says that Caesar procured his elder brother's murder in a corner of the

Ghetto, and that the Pope on learning of it, became as if crazy, and went into the full Consistory with his garments torn and ashes on his head."

"What love for traditional symbolism!" said Caesar.

"Everybody is not so anti-traditional as you. I will go on with my explanation," added Kennedy. "Saint Catherine has Lucrezia's features. She is small and slender. She wears her hair down, a little cap with a pearl cross which hangs on her forehead, and a collar also of pearls. She has large eyes, a candid expression. Cagnolo da Parma will say of her, when she goes to Ferrara, that she has '*il naso profilato e bello, li capelli aurei, gli occhi bianchi, la bocca alquanto grande con li denti candidissimi.*' Literature will portray this sweet-faced little blond girl as a Messalina, a poisoner, and incestuous with her brothers and her father. At this time Lucrezia had just married Giovanni Sforza, although as a matter of fact the two never lived together. Giovanni Sforza is the little young man who appears there in the back of the picture riding a spirited horse. Sforza wears his hair like a woman, and has a broad-brimmed hat and a red mantle. A little later Caesar Borgia will try several times to assassinate him."

"What for?" asked Caesar.

"No doubt he found him in the way. The man who is in the foreground, next to the Emperor's throne, is Andrew Paleologos," Kennedy continued. "He is the one wearing a pale purple cloak and looking so melancholy. It used to be supposed that he was Giovanni Borgia. Now they say that it is Paleologos, whom the death of the Emperor Constantine XIII, about this time, had caused to lose the crown of Byzance.

"Here at the right, riding a Barbary horse, is Prince Djem, second son of Muhammad II, whom Alexander VI kept as a hostage. Djem, as you see, has an expressive face, a prominent nose, lively eyes, a long pointed beard, a shock of hair, and a big turban. He rides Moorish fashion, with his stirrups very short, and wears a curved cutlass in his belt. He is a great friend of Caesar Borgia's, which does not prevent Caesar and his father, according to public rumour, from poisoning him at a

farewell banquet in Capua. And here is Giovanni Sforza again, on foot. Are those two children the younger sons of Alexander VI? Or are they Lucrezia and Caesar again? I don't know. Behind Paleologos are the Pope's domestic retainers, and among them Pinturicchio himself."

THE LIFE OF CAESAR BORGIA

After explaining the picture in detail, Kennedy went into the next room, followed by Caesar. This is called the Hall of the Liberal Arts, and is adorned with a large marble mantel.

"Is there no portrait here of Caesar Borgia?" asked Caesar.

"No. Here I have a photograph of the one by Giorgione," said Kennedy, showing a postal card.

"What sort of man was he? What did he do?"

Kennedy seated himself on a bench near the window and Caesar sat beside him.

"Caesar Borgia," said Kennedy, "came to Rome from the university of Pisa, approximately at the time when they made his father Pope. He must then have been about twenty, and was strong and active. He broke in horses, was an expert fencer and shot, and killed bulls in the ring."

"That too?"

"He was a good Spaniard. In a court that cannot be seen from here, on account of those thick panes, but on which these windows look, Caesar Borgia fought bulls, and the Pope stood here to watch his son's dexterity with the sword."

"What ruffians!" exclaimed Caesar, smiling.

The Englishman continued with the history of Borgia, his intrigues with the King of France, the death of Lucrezia's husband, the assassinations attributed to the Pope's son, the mysterious execution of Ramiro del Orco, which made Machiavelli say that Caesar Borgia was the prince who best knew how to make and unmake men, according to their merits; finally the *coup d'état* at Sinigaglia with the *condottieri*.

By this time Caesar Moncada was very anxious to know *more*. These Borgias interested him. His sympathies went out *toward those great* bandits who dominated Rome and tried to

get all Italy into their power, leaf by leaf, like an artichoke. Their purpose struck him as a good one, almost a moral one. The device, *Aut Caesar, aut nihil,* was worthy of a man of energy and courage.

Kennedy seeing Caesar's interest, then recounted the scene at Cardinal Adrian Corneto's country-house; Alexander's intention to give a supper there to various Cardinals and poison them all with a wine that had been put into three bottles, so as to inherit from them, the superstitiousness of the Pope, who sent Cardinal Caraffa to the Vatican for a golden box in which he kept his consecrated Host, from which he was never separated; and the mistake of the chamberlain, who served the poisoned wine to Caesar and his father.

"Here, to this very room, they brought the dying Pope," said Kennedy, and pointed to a door, on whose marble lintel one may read: *Alexander Borgia Valentín P. P.* "They say he passed eight days here between life and death, before he did die, and that when his corpse was exposed, it decomposed horribly."

Then Kennedy related the story of Caesar's trying to cure himself by the strange method of being put inside of a mule just dead; his flight from Rome, sick on a litter, with his soldiers, as far as the Romagna; his imprisonment in the Castel Sant' Angelo; his capture by the Great Captain; his efforts to escape from his prison at Medina del Campo; and his obscure death on the Mendavia road, near Viana in Navarre, through one of the Count of Lerín's soldiers, named Garcés, a native of Agreda, who gave Borgia such a blow with a lance that it broke his armour and passed all the way through his body.

Caesar was stirred up. Hearing the story of the people who had lived there, in those very rooms, gave him an impression of complete reality.

When they went out again by the Gallery of Inscriptions, they looked from a window.

"It must have been here that he fought bulls?" said Caesar.

"Yes."

The court was large, with a fountain of four streams in the middle.

"Life then must have been more intense than now," said Caesar.

"Who knows? Perhaps it was the same as now," replied Kennedy.

"And what does history, exact history, say of these Borgias?"

"Of Pope Alexander VI it says that he had his children in wedlock; that he was a good administrator; that the people were content with him; that the influence of Spain was justifiable, because he was Spanish; that the story of the poisonings does not seem certain; and that he himself could hardly have died of poison, but rather of a malarial fever."

"And about Lucrezia?"

"Of Lucrezia it says that she was a woman like those of her period; that there are no proofs for belief in her incests and her poisonings; and that her first marriages, which were never really consummated, were nothing more than political moves of her father and her brother's."

"And about Caesar?"

"Caesar is the one member of the family who appears really terrible. His device, *Aut Caesar, aut nihil,* was not a chance phrase, but the irrevocable decision to be a king or to be nothing."

"That, at least, is not a mystification," murmured Caesar.

IN FRONT OF THE CASTEL SANT' ANGELO

They left the Vatican, crossed the Piazza di San Pietro, and drew near the river.

As they passed in front of the Castel Sant' Angelo, Kennedy said:

"Alexander VI shut himself up in this castle to weep for the Duke of Gandia. From one of those windows he watched the funeral procession of his son, whom they were carrying to Santa Maria del Popolo. According to old Italian custom they bore the corpse in an open casket. The funeral was at night, and two hundred men with torches lighted the way When the cortège set foot on this bridge, the Pope's retinue saw him draw back with horror, and cover his face, crying out sharply."

XIX

CAESAR'S REFLECTIONS

"I HAVE had the curiosity," Caesar wrote to his friend Alzugaray, "to inform myself about the life of the Borgias, and going on from one to another, I reached Saint Francis Borgia; and from Saint Francis I have gone backwards to Saint Ignatius Loyola.

"The parallelism between the doings of Caesar Borgia and of Iñigo de Loyola surprised me; what one tried to do in the sphere of action, the other did in the sphere of thought. These twin Spanish figures, both odious to the masses, have given its direction to the Church; one, Loyola, through the impulse to spiritual power; the other, Caesar Borgia, through the impulse to temporal power.

"One may say that Spain gave Papal Rome its thought and activity, as it gave the Rome of the Caesars also its thought and activity, through Seneca and Trajan.

"Really it is curious to see the traces that remain in Rome of that Basque, Iñigo. That half farceur, half ruffian, who had the characteristics of a modern anarchist, was a genius for organization. Bakunin and Mazzini are poor devils beside him. The Church still lives through Loyola. He was her last reformer.

"The Society of Jesus is the knot of the whole Catholic scaffolding; the Jesuits know that on the day when this knot, which their Society forms, is cut or pulled open, the whole frame-work of out-of-date ideas and lies, which defends the Vatican, will come down with a terrible noise.

"Rome lives on Jesuitism. Indubitably, without Loyola, Catholicism would have rotted away much sooner. It is obvious

that this would have been better, but we are not talking about that. A good general is not one who defends just causes, but one who wins battles.

"The Borgias, Luther, and Saint Ignatius, between them, killed the predominance of the Latin race.

"The Borgias threw discredit on the free Renaissance life, before the face of all nations; Luther removed the centre of spiritual life and philosophy to Germany and England; Saint Ignatius prevented Roman Catholicism from rotting away; he put iron braces on the body that was doubling over with weakness, and inside his braces the body has gone on decomposing and has poisoned the Latin countries.

"On hearing this opinion here, they asked me:

"'Then you think Catholicism is dead?'

"'No, no; as to having any civilizing effect, it is dead; but as to having a sentimental effect, it is very much alive . . . and it will still unfortunately keep on being alive. All this business of the Virgin del Pilar and the Virgin del Carmen, and saints, and processions, and magnificent churches, is a terrible strength. . . . If there were an emancipated bourgeoisie and a sensible working class, Catholicism would not be a peril; but there are not, and Catholicism will have, not perhaps an overpowering expansion, but at least moments of new growth. While we have a lazy rich class and a brutalized poor class, Catholicism will be strong.'

"Leaving the utilitarian and moral questions aside, and considering merely the amount of influence and the traces left by this influence, one can see that Rome is living on Loyola's work and still dreaming of Borgia's. Those pilgrims in the Piazza di San Pietro who enthusiastically yell, *Viva il Papa-re!* are acclaiming the memory of Caesar Borgia. Thus you have the absurd result, people who speak with horror of an historic figure and still hold his work in admiration.

"This Spanish influence that our country gave to the Church in two ways, spiritual and material,— to the Church which now *is an institution* not merely foreign but contrary to our *nature*,— Spain ought today to try to use in her own behalf.

Spain's work ought to be to organize extra-religious individualism.

"We are individualists; therefore what we need is an iron discipline, like soldiers.

"This discipline established, we ought to spread it through the contiguous countries, especially through Africa. Democracy, the Republic, Socialism, have not, essentially, any root in our land. Families, cities, classes, can be united in a pact; isolated men, like us, can be united only by discipline.

"Moreover, as for us, we do not recognize prestige, nor do we cheerfully accept either kings or presidents or high priests or grand magi.

"The only thing that would suit us would be to have a chief . . . for the pleasure of eating him alive.

"A Loyola of the extra-religious individualism is what Spain needs. Deeds, always deeds, and a cold philosophy, realistic, based on deeds, and a morality based on action. Don't you agree?

"I think, and I am becoming more confirmed in my opinion, that the only people who can give a direction, found a new civilization with its own proper characteristics, for that old Iberian race, which probably sprang from the shores of the Mediterranean . . . is we Spaniards.

"'Why only you Spaniards?' my friend Kennedy asked me; and I told him:

"'To me it seems indubitable. France is leaning constantly more towards the North. In Italy the same is true; Milan and Turin, where the Saxon and the Gaul predominate, are the real capitals of Italy. In Spain, however, this does not happen. We are separated from the rest of Europe by the Pyrenees, and joined to Africa by the sea and climate. Our plan ought to be to construct a great European Empire, to impose our ideas on the peninsula, and then to spread them everywhere.'"

XX

DON CALIXTO AT SAINT PETER'S

DON CALIXTO UNDERSTANDS

KENNEDY was anxious that Caesar should turn into the good road. The good road, for him, was art.

"At heart," the Englishman informed him, "I am one of those Brothers of the Esthetic Doctrine who irritate you, and I must instruct you in the faith."

"I am not opposed to your trying to instruct me."

The two went several times to see museums, especially the Vatican museum.

One day, on leaving the Sistine Chapel, where they had had a long discussion on the merits of Michelangelo, Caesar met the painter Cortés, who came to speak to him.

"I am here with a gentleman from my town, who is a Senator," said Cortés. "A boresome old boy. Shall I introduce him?"

"All right."

"He is an old fool who knows nothing about anything and talks about everything."

Cortés presented Caesar to Don Calixto García Guerrero, a man of some fifty-odd, Senator and boss of the province of Zamora.

Don Calixto invited Caesar and Kennedy to dine with him. The Englishman expressed regrets, and Caesar said he would go. They took leave of Cortés and Don Calixto, and went out to the Piazza di San Pietro.

"I imagine you are going to be bored tomorrow dining with that old countryman of yours," said Kennedy.

"Oh, surely. He has all the signs of a soporific person; but who knows? a type like that sometimes has influence."

"So you are dining with him with a more or less practical object?"

"Why, of course."

The next evening, Caesar, in his evening clothes, betook himself to an hotel in the Piazza di Spagna, where Don Calixto García Guerrero was staying. Don Calixto received him very cordially. He doubtless knew that Caesar was nephew to Cardinal Fort and brother to a marchioness, and doubtless that flattered Don Calixto.

Don Calixto honoured Caesar with an excellent dinner, and during dessert became candid with him. He had come to Rome to put through his obtaining a Papal title. He was a friend of the Spanish Ambassador to the Vatican, and it wouldn't have cost him any more to be made a prince, a duke, or a marquis; but he preferred the title of count. He had a magnificent estate called La Sauceda, and he wanted to be the Count de la Sauceda.

Caesar comprehended that this gentleman might be fortune coming in the guise of chance, and he set himself to making good with him, to telling him stories of aristocratic life in Rome, some of which he had read in books, and some of which he had heard somewhere or other.

"What vices must exist here!" Don Calixto kept exclaiming. "That is why they say: '*Roma veduta, fede perduta.*'"

Caesar noted that Don Calixto had a great enthusiasm for the aristocracy; and so he took pains, every time he talked with him, to mix the names of a few princes and marquises into the conversation; he also gave him to understand that he lived among them, and went so far as to hint the possibility of being of service to him in Rome, but in a manner ambiguous enough to permit of withdrawing the offer in case of necessity. Fortunately for Caesar, Don Calixto had his affairs all completely arranged; the one thing he desired was that Caesar, whom he supposed to be an expert on archeological questions, should go about with him the three or four days he expected to remain

in Rome. He had spent a whole week making calls, and as yet had seen nothing.

Caesar had no other recourse but to buy a Baedeker and read it and learn a lot of things quite devoid of interest for him.

The next day Don Calixto was waiting for him in a carriage at the door, and they went to see the sights.

Don Calixto was a man that made phrases and ornamented them with many adverbs ending in -ly.

"Verily," he said, after his first archeological walk in Rome, "verily, it seems strange that after more than two thousand years have passed, all these monuments should still remain."

"That is most true," replied Caesar, looking at him with his impassive air.

"I understand why Rome is the real school for learning, integrally, both ancient and modern history."

"Most certainly," agreed Caesar.

Don Calixto, who knew neither Italian nor French, found a source of help, for the days he was to spend in Rome, in Caesar's friendship, and made him accompany him everywhere. Caesar was able to collect and preserve, though not precisely cut in brass, the phrases Don Calixto uttered in front of the principal monuments of Rome.

In front of the Colosseum, his first exclamation was: "What a lot of stone!" Then recalling his rôle of orator, he exclaimed: "The spirits are certainly daunted and the mind darkened on thinking how men could have sunk to such abysses of evil."

"Don Calixto is referring to those holes," thought Caesar, looking at the cellars of the Circo Romano.

From the Colosseum the carriage went to the Capitol, and then Don Calixto asserted with energy:

"One cannot deny that, say what you will, Rome is one of the places most fertile in memories."

Don Calixto was an easy traveller for his *cicerone*. He far preferred talking to being given explanations; Caesar had said to him: "Don Calixto, you understand everything, by in*tuition.*"

And being thus reassured, Don Calixto kept uttering terrible absurdities.

One day Don Calixto went to see the Pope, in evening clothes and with his abdomen covered with decorations, and he asked Caesar if a photographer couldn't take his picture in the act of leaving the carriage, so that the photograph would have Saint Peter's as a background.

"Yes, I think so. Why not? The only thing will be that the photographer will charge you more."

"I don't mind that. Could you arrange it for me?"

"Yes, man."

What Don Calixto desired was done.

"How did the Pope impress you?" Caesar asked him as he came out.

"Very favourably, very favourably indeed."

"He has a stupid face, hasn't he?"

"No, man, not at all. He is like a nice country priest. His predecessor was no doubt more of a diplomat, more intelligent."

"Yes, the other seemed more of a rogue," said Caesar, laughing at the precautions Don Calixto took in giving his opinion.

The proofs of the photographs came in the evening, and Don Calixto was enchanted with them. In one of them you could see the Swiss guard at the door, with his lance. It was splendid. Don Calixto would not permit Caesar to go to his hotel, but invited him for dinner; and after dinner told him he was so indebted that he would be delighted to do anything Caesar asked him.

"Why don't you make me a Deputy?" said Caesar, laughing.

"Do you want to be one?"

"Yes, man."

"Really?"

"I should think so."

"But you would have to live in Madrid."

"Certainly."

"Would you leave here?"

"Yes, why not?"

"*Then, not* another word, we will say no more about it.

When the time comes, you will write to me and say: 'Don Calixto, the moment has arrived for you to remember your promise: I want to be a Deputy.'"

"Very good. I will do it, and you shall present me as candidate for Castro . . . Castro . . . what?"

"Castro Duro."

"You will see me there then."

"All right. And now, another favour. There is a Canon from Zamora here, a friend of mine, who came on the pilgrimage and who desires nothing so much as to see Saint Peter's and the Catacombs rather thoroughly. I could explain everything to him, but I am not sure about the dates. Will you come with us?"

"With great pleasure."

"Then we shall expect you here at ten."

"That will be fine."

Sure enough, at ten Caesar was there. Don Calixto and his friend the Canon Don Justo, who was a large gentleman, tall and fleshy and with a long nose, were waiting. The three got into the carriage.

"I hope this priest isn't going to be one of those library rats who know everything on earth," thought Caesar, but when he heard him make a couple of mistakes in grammar, he became tranquil.

THEODORA AND MAROZIA

As they passed the Castel Sant' Angelo, Caesar began to tell the story of Theodora and her daughter Marozia, the two women who lived there and who, for forty odd years, changed the Popes as one changes cooks.

"You know the history of those women?" asked Caesar.

"I don't," said the Canon.

"Nor I," added Don Calixto.

"Then I will tell it to you before we get to Saint Peter's. Theodora, an influential lady, fell in love with a young priest of Ravenna, and had him elected Pope, by the name of John X. Her daughter Marozia, a young girl and a virgin, gave herself

to Pope Sergius III, a capricious, fantastic man, who had once had the witty idea of digging up Pope Formosus and subjecting him, putrefied as he was, to the judgment of a Synod. By this eccentric man Marozia had a son, and afterwards was married three times more. She exercised an omnipotent sway over the Holy See. John X, her mother's lover, she deposed and sent to die in prison. With his successor, Leo VI, whom she herself had appointed Pope, she did the same. The following Pope, Stephen VII, died of illness, twenty months after his reign began, and then Marozia gave the Papal crown to the son she had had by Sergius III, who took the name of John XI. This Pope and his brother Alberic, began to feel their mother's influence rather heavy, and during a popular revolt they decided to get Marozia into their power, and they seized her and buried her alive in the *in pace* of a convent."

"But is all this authentic?" asked the Canon, completely stupefied.

"Absolutely authentic."

The Canon made a gesture of resignation and looked at Don Calixto in astonishment.

While Caesar was telling the story, the carriage had passed down a narrow and rather deserted street, called Borgo Vecchio, in whose windows clothes were hanging out to dry, and then they came out in the Piazza di San Pietro. They drove around one edge of this enormous square. The sky was blue. A fountain was throwing water, which changed to a cloud in the air and produced a brilliant rainbow.

"One certainly wonders," said Caesar, "if Saint Peter's is not one of the buildings in the worst taste that exist in the world."

They got out in front of the steps.

"Your friend is probably well up on archeological matters?" asked Caesar.

"Who? Don Justo? Not in the least."

Caesar began to laugh, went up the steps ahead of the others, lifted the leather curtain, and they all three went into Saint Peter's

THERE IS NO PERFORMANCE

Caesar began his explanations with the plan of the churc The Canon passed his hand over all the stones and kept sayin

"This is marble too," and adding, "How expensive!"

"Do you like this, Don Calixto?" Caesar asked.

"What a question, man!"

"Well, it is obviously very rich and very sumptuous, but must give a fanatic coming here from far away the same fe ing a person gets when he has a cold and asks for a hot dri and is given a glass of iced orgeat."

"Don't let Don Justo hear you," said Don Calixto, as if th ought to keep the secret about the orgeat between the two them.

They came to the statue of Saint Peter, and Caesar told the it is the custom for strangers to kiss its foot. The Can piously did so, but Don Calixto, who was somewhat unea rubbed the statue's worn foot surreptitiously with his handke chief and then kissed it.

Caesar abstained from kissing it, because he said the kiss w efficacious principally for strangers.

Then they went along, looking at the tombs of the Pop Caesar was several times mistaken in his explanations, but h friends did not notice his mistakes.

The thing that surprised the Canon most was the tomb Alexander VII, because there is a skeleton on it. Don Calix stopped with most curiosity before the tomb of Paul III, which one sees two nude women. Caesar told them th popular legend claims that one of these statues, the one repr senting Justice, is Julia Farnese, sister of Pope Paul III, a mistress of Pope Alexander VI; but such a supposition seer unlikely.

"Entirely," insisted the Canon gravely; "those are things i vented by the Free Thinkers."

Don Calixto allowed himself to say that most of the Pop looked like drum-majors.

Don Justo continued appraising everything he saw like

contractor. Caesar devoted himself to retailing his observations to Don Calixto, while the Canon walked alone.

"I will inform you," he told him, "that on Saturday one may go up in the dome, but only decently dressed people. So a placard on that door informs us. If by any chance an apostle should re-arise and have a fancy to do a little gymnastics and see Rome from a height, as he would probably be dirty and badly dressed, he would get left, they wouldn't let him go up. And then he could say: 'Invent a religion like the Christian religion, so that after a while they won't let you go up in the dome.'"

"Yes, certainly, certainly," replied Don Calixto. "They are absurd. But do not let the Canon hear you. To be sure, all this does not look very religious, but it is magnificent."

"Yes, it is a beautiful stage-setting, but there is no performance," said Caesar.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Don Calixto.

"That this is an empty place. It would have been well to build a temple as large and light as this in honour of Science, which is humanity's great creation. These statues, instead of being stupid or warlike Popes, ought to be the inventor of vaccination or of chloroform. Then one could understand the chilliness and the fairly menacing air that everything in the place wears. Let people have confidence in the truth and in work, that is good; but that a religion founded on mysteries, on obscurities, should build a bright, challenging, flippant temple, is ridiculous."

"Yes, yes," said Don Calixto, always preoccupied in keeping the Canon from hearing, "you talk like a modern man. I myself, down in my heart, you know. . . . I believe you follow me, eh?"

"Yes, man."

"Well, I think that all this has no transcendency. . . . That is to say. . . ."

"No, it has none. You may well say so, Don Calixto."

"But it did have it. That cannot be doubted, can it? And a great deal. This is undeniable."

IT IS A MAGNIFICENT BUSINESS CONCERN

"It was really a magnificent business concern," said Caesar. "Think of monopolizing heaven and hell, selling the shares here on earth and paying the dividends in heaven! There's no guarantee trust company or pawn-broker that pays an interest like that. And at its height, how many branches it developed! Here, in this square, I have a friend, a Jewish dealer in rosaries, who tells me his trade is flourishing. In three weeks he has sold a hundred and fifty kilos of rosaries blessed by the Pope, two hundred kilos of medals, and about half a square kilometre of scapulars."

"What an exaggeration!" said Don Calixto.

"No, it is the truth. He is glad that these things, which he considers accursed, sell, because after all, he is a liberal and a Jew; the only thing he does, if he can, to ease his conscience, is to get ten per cent. profit on everything, and he says to himself: 'Let the Catholics worry!'"

"What tales! If the Canon should hear you!"

"No, but all this is true. As my friend says: Business is business. And he has made me take notice that when the Garibaldini come here, they spend the price of a few bottles of Chianti, and then they sleep in any dog-kennel, and spend nothing more. On the contrary, the rich Catholics buy and buy . . . and off go his kilos of rosaries and of medals, his tons of veils for visiting the Pope, his reams of indulgences for eating meat, and for eating fish and meat, and even for blowing your nose on pages of the Bible if you like."

"Do not be so disrespectful."

When the Canon had made sure of all the square metres of marble there are in Saint Peter's they went out into the square again. Caesar indicated the heap of irregular edifices that form the Vatican.

"That ought to be the Pope's room," said Caesar, pointing to a window, at random. "You must have been there, Don Calixto?"

"I don't know. Really," he said, "I haven't much idea where I was."

"Nor has he any idea how he went," thought Caesar, and added: "That is the Library; over there is the Secretary of State's apartment; there is where the Holy Office meets"; and he said whatsoever occurred to him, perfectly tranquilly.

They took their carriage, and as they passed a shop for objects of religion, Don Calixto said to the Canon:

"What do you say to this, Don Justo? According to Don Caesar, the proprietors of the shops where they sell medals, are Jews."

"Bah! that cannot be so," replied the Canon roundly.

"Why not?"

"Bah!"

"Why should it shock you?" exclaimed Caesar. "If they sold Jesus Christ alive, why are they not to sell him dead?"

"Well, I am glad to know it," Don Justo burst forth, "because I was going to buy some medals for presents, and now I won't buy them."

Don Calixto smiled, and Caesar understood that the good Canon was taking advantage of the information to save a penny.

XXI

DON CALIXTO IN THE CATACOMBS

DON CALIXTO and the Canon were very anxious to visit the Catacombs. Caesar knew that the visit is not entirely agreeable, and attempted to dissuade them from their intention.

"I don't know whether you gentlemen know that one has to spend the entire day there."

"Without lunch?" asked the Canon.

"Yes."

"Oh, no; that is impossible."

"One has to sacrifice oneself for the sake of Christianity," said Caesar.

"You haven't much desire to sacrifice yourself," retorted Don Calixto.

"Because I believe it is damp and unwholesome down there, and a Christian bronchitis would not be wholly pleasant, despite its religious origin. And besides, as you already know, one must go without food."

"We might eat something there," said Don Justo.

"Eat there!" exclaimed Caesar. "Eat a slice of ham, in front of the niches of the Catacombs! It would make me sick."

"It wouldn't me," replied the Canon.

"In front of the tombs of martyrs and saints!"

"Even if they were saints, they ate too," replied the Canon, with his excellent good sense.

Caesar had to agree that even if they were saints, they ate.

There was a French family at the hotel who were also thinking *of going* to see the Catacombs, and Don Calixto and Don *Justo decided to* go the same day with them.

The French family consisted of a Breton gentleman, tall and whiskered, who had been at sea; his wife, who looked like a village woman; and the daughter, a slender, pale, sad young lady. They had with them, half governess, half maid, a lean peasant-woman with a suspicious air.

The young lady confessed to Caesar that she had been dreaming of the Catacombs for a long while. She knew the description Chateaubriand gives of them in *Les Martyres* by heart.

The next day the French family in one landau, and Don Calixto with the Canon and Caesar in another, went to see the Catacombs.

The French family had brought a fat, smiling abbé as cicerone.

Five persons couldn't get inside the landau, and the Breton gentleman had to sit by the driver. Don Calixto offered him a seat in his carriage, but the Breton, who must have been obstinate as a mule, said no, that from the driver's seat he enjoyed more of the panorama.

They halted a moment, on the abbé's advice, at the Baths of Caracalla, and went through them. The cicerone explained where the different bathing-rooms had been and the size of the pools. Those cyclopean buildings, those high, high arches, those enormous walls, left Caesar overcome.

One couldn't understand a thing like this except in a town which had a mania for the gigantic, the titanic.

They left the baths and started along. They followed the Via di Porta San Sebastiano, between two walls. They left behind the imposing ruins of the Baths of Caracalla and various establishments for archeological reconstructions, and the carriage stopped at the gate of the Catacombs.

They went in, guided by the abbé, and arrived at a sort of office.

They each paid a lira for a taper which a friar was handing out, and they joined a group of other people, without quite knowing what they expected next. In the group there were two German Dominicans, a tall one whose fiery red beard hung to his waist, and a slim one, with a nose like a knife.

IRREVERENT CICERONE

It was not long before another numerous group of tourists came out of a hole in the floor, and among them was a Trappist brother who came over to where Don Calixto and Caesar were. The Trappist carried a stick, and a taper twisted in the end of the stick. He asked if everybody understood French; any one that didn't could wait for another group.

"I don't understand it," said the Canon.

"I will translate what he says, to you," replied Caesar.

"All right," answered the Canon.

"*En avant, messieurs,*" said the Trappist, lighting his taper, and requesting them all to do the same.

They went around giving one another a light, and with their little candles aflame they began to descend into the Catacombs.

They went in by a gallery as narrow as one in a mine, which once in a while broadened into bigger spaces.

In certain spots there were openings in the roof.

Caesar had never thought about what the celebrated Catacombs would be like, but he had not expected them so poor and so sinister.

The sensation they caused was disagreeable, a sensation of choking, of suffocation, without one's really getting any impression of grandeur. The place seemed like an abandoned ant-hill. The wide spaces that opened out at the sides of the passage were chapels, the monk said.

The Trappist cicerone contributed to removing any serious feelings with his chatter and his jokes. Being familiar with these tombs, he had lost respect for them, as sacristans lose it for the saints they brush the dust off of with a feather-duster. Moreover, he judged everything by an esthetic criterion, completely devoid of respect; for him there were only sepulchres with artistic character, or without it; of a good or a poor period; and the latter sort he struck contemptuously with his stick.

The marine Breton was irritated, and asked Caesar several times:

"*Why is that* permitted?"

"I don't know," answered Caesar.

The monk made extraordinary remarks.

Explaining the life of the Christians in the earliest eras of Christianity, he said:

"In this century the habits of the pontiffs were so lax that the Pope had to go out accompanied by two persons to insure his modest behaviour."

"Oh, oh!" said a young Frenchman, in a tone of vexation.

"*Ah! C'est l'histoire,*" replied the monk.

Caesar translated what the Trappist had said, to Don Calixto and the Canon, and they were both really perplexed.

They followed the long, narrow galleries. It was a strange effect, seeing the procession of tourists with their burning candles. One didn't notice the modern clothes and the ladies' hats, and from a distance the procession lighted by the little flames of the candles, had a mysterious look.

At the tail of the crowd walked two men who spoke English. One was a "gentleman" little versed in archeological questions; the other a tall person with the face of a scholar. Caesar drew near them to listen. The one was explaining to his companion everything they saw as they went along, the signification of the emblems cut in the tablets, and the funerary customs of the Christians.

"Didn't they put crosses?" asked the unlearned gentleman.

"No," said the other. "It is said that for the Romans the *crux* represented the gallows! Thus the earliest representation of the Crucified is a drawing in the Kirchnerian museum, which shows a Christian kneeling before a man with a donkey's head, who is nailed to a cross. In Greek letters one reads: 'Alexamenes adores his God.' They say this drawing comes from the Palace of the Caesars, and it is considered to be a caricature of Christ, drawn by a Roman soldier on a wall."

"Didn't they put up images of Christ, either?"

"No. You do not consider that they were at the height of the discussion as to whether Christ was ugly or beautiful."

The tall gentleman got involved in a long dissertation as to what motives they had had, some to insist that Christ's person

was of great beauty, others to affirm that it was of terrible ugliness.

Caesar would have liked to go on listening to what this gentleman said, but Don Justo joined him. The Trappist was in front of two mummies, explaining something, and he wanted Caesar to translate what he was saying.

Caesar did this bit of interpreting for him. The candles were beginning to burn out and it was necessary to leave.

The cicerone took them rapidly along a gallery at whose end there was a stairway, and they issued into the sunlight. The monk extinguished the taper on his stick, and began crying:

"Now, gentlemen, do you want any scapulars, medals, chocolate?"

Caesar looked over his companions in the expedition. The Canon was indifferent. The old maritime Breton showed signs of profound indignation, and his daughter, the little French mystic, had tears in her eyes.

"That poor little French girl, who arrived here so full of enthusiasm, has come out of these Catacombs like a rat out of a sewer," said Caesar.

"And why so?" asked Don Calixto.

"Because of the things the monk said. He was really scandalous."

"It is true," said the Canon gravely. "I never would have believed it."

"*Roma veduta, fede perduta,*" said Don Calixto. "And as for you, Caesar, hasn't this visit interested you?"

"Yes, I have been interested in trying to keep from catching cold."

AGRO ROMANO

The landau that the Breton family was in took the Appian Way, and Caesar and Don Calixto's carriage followed behind it.

They passed the tomb of Cecilia Metella, and were able to look ahead along the old road, on whose sides one sees the *remains of* aqueducts, which at evening-fall have a grandeur *so imposing.*

Don Calixto and Don Justo were discussing a question of home politics.

On them magnificently indifferent, the broken sepulchres, the abandoned arches invaded by grass, the vestiges of a gigantic civilization, did not produce the least impression.

The coachman pointed out Frascati on the slope of a mountain, Albano, Grotta Ferrata, and Tivoli.

Caesar felt the grandeur of the landscape; the enormous sadness of the remnants of aqueducts, which had the colour of rusty iron, beneath a sky of pink clouds.

At dusk they turned back. Caesar felt a weight on his spirits. The walls of the Baths of Caracalla looked threatening to him. Those great towering thick walls, broken, brick-colour, burned by the sun, gave him an impression of the strength of the past. There were no trees, no houses near them; as if those imposing ruins precluded any life round about. Only one humble almond-tree held out its white flowers.

Don Calixto and the Canon continued chatting.

XXII

SENTIMENTALITY AND ARCHEOLOGY

DON CALIXTO and the Canon went away to Spain. Caesar thought he was wasting time in Rome and that he ought to get out, but he remained. He kept wondering why Susanna Marchmont had left and never written him.

Twice he asked about her at the Hotel Excelsior, and was told that she had not returned.

One evening at the beginning of May, when he had managed to decide to pack up and go, he received a card from Susanna, telling him of her arrival and inviting him to have tea at the *Ristorante del Castello dei Cesari.*

Caesar immediately left the hotel and took a cab, which carried him to the top of the Aventine Hill.

He got out at the entrance to the garden of the *Ristorante,* went across it, and out on a large terrace.

There were a number of Americans having tea, and in one group of them was Susanna.

"How late you come!" she said.

"I have just received your card. And what did you do in Corfu? How did things go down there?"

"Very well indeed. It is all wonderful. And I have been in Epirus and Albania, too."

Susanna related her impressions of those countries, with many details, which, surely, she had read in Baedeker.

She was very smart, and prettier than ever. She said her husband must be in London; she had had no news from him *for more* than a month.

"And how did you know I was still here?" Caesar asked her.

"Through Kennedy. He wrote to me. He is a good friend. He talked a lot about you in his letters."

Caesar thought he noticed that Susanna talked with more enthusiasm than ordinarily. Perhaps distance had produced a similar effect on her to what wondering about her had on him. Caesar looked at her almost passionately.

From the terrace one could see the tragic ruins of the Palace of the Caesars; broken arcades covered with grass, remains of walls still standing, the openings of arches and windows, and here and there a pointed cypress or a stone pine among the great devastated walls.

Far away one could see the country, Frascati, and the blue mountains of the distance.

As it was already late, the group of Susanna's American friends decided to return by carriage.

"I am going to walk," said Susanna in a low tone. "Would you like to come with me?"

"With great pleasure."

They took leave of the others, went down the garden road, which was decorated on both sides with ancient statues and tablets, and issued on the Via di Santa Prisca, a street between two dark walls, with a lamp every once in a while.

"What a sky!" she exclaimed.

"It is splendid."

It was of a blue with the lustre of mother-of-pearl; in the zenith a stray star was imperceptibly shining; to the west floated golden and red clouds.

They went down the steep street, alongside a garden wall. In some places, bunches of century plants showed their hard spikes, sharp as daggers, over the low walls.

There was a great silence in this coming of night. Among the foliage of the trees they heard the piping of sparrows. From far away there came, from time to time, the puffing of a train.

DESOLATION

They walked without speaking, mastered by the melancholy of their surroundings. Now and again, a peasant, tanned by the sun, with his little sack full of grass, came home from the fields, singing.

Caesar and Susanna passed alongside of the Jewish cemetery, and stopped to look in through a grill. The wall hid the burning zone of twilight; a greenish blue reigned in the zenith.

They went on again. A bell began to ring.

Caesar was depressed. Susanna was silent.

They crossed a street of new, dark houses; they passed by a little square with a melancholy church. The street they took was named for Saint Theodore. To the left, down the Via del Velabro, they saw an arch with many niches on the sides of the single opening.

A band of black seminarians passed.

"Poor creatures!" murmured Caesar.

"Are you very sympathetic?" said Susanna, mockingly.

"Yes, those chaps rouse my pity."

Now, on the right, the furious ruins of the Palatine were piled up: brick walls, ruined arches, decrepit partitions, and above, the terrace of a garden with a balustrade. Over the terrace, against the sky, were the silhouettes of high cypresses almost black, of ilexes with their dense foliage, and a large palm with arching leaves.

From these so tragic ruins there seemed to exhale a great desolation, beneath the deep, green sky.

Susanna and Caesar drew near the Forum.

In the opaque light of dusk the Forum had the air of a cemetery. Two lighted windows were shining in the high dark wall of the Tabularium, and sharp-toned bells were beginning to ring.

They went up the stairway that leads to the Capitol, and on a little terrace they stopped to look at the Forum.

"What terrible desolation!" exclaimed Susanna.

"*All the stones* look like tombs," said Caesar.

"Yes, that is true."

"What are those three high open vaults that give so strange an impression of immense size?" asked Caesar.

"That is what remains of Constantine's basilica."

For a long while they gazed at that abandoned space, with its melancholy columns and white stones.

In a street running into the Forum, there began to shine two rows of gaslights of a greenish colour.

As they passed down the slope leading to the Capitol, in a little street to the left, the Via Monte Tarpea, they saw a funeral procession ready to start. At that moment the corpse was being brought into the street. Several women in black were waiting by the house door with lighted candles.

The priest, in his white surplice and holding up his cross, gave the order to start, and pushed to the front of the crowd; four men raised the bier and took it on their shoulders, and the procession of women in black, men, and children, followed behind. Bells with sharp voices began again to sound in the air.

"Oh, isn't it sad!" said Susanna, lifting her hand to her breast.

They watched how the procession moved away, and then Caesar murmured, ill-humouredly:

"It is stupid."

"What?" asked Susanna.

"I say that it's stupid to take pleasure in feeling miserable. What we are doing is absurd and unhealthy."

Susanna burst into laughter, and when she said good-night to Caesar she squeezed his hand energetically.

XXIII

THE 'SCUTCHEON OF A CHURCH

"SUSANNA MARCHMONT," Caesar wrote to his friend Alzugaray, "is a beautiful woman, rich, and apparently intelligent. She has given me to understand that she feels a certain inclination for me, and if I please her well enough, she will get a divorce and marry me.

"I have discovered the reasons for her inclination, first in a desire to revenge herself on her husband by marrying the brother of the woman he has fallen in love with; secondly, in my not having made love to her, like the majority of the men she has known.

"Really, Susanna is a beautiful woman; but whereas other women gain by being looked at and listened to, with her it is not so. In this beautiful woman there is something cold, utilitarian, which she does not succeed in hiding by her artistic effusions. Besides she has a great deal of vanity, but stupid vanity. She has asked me if I couldn't manage to acquire a high-sounding, decorative title in Spain.

"If Susanna knew that in my heart I keep up her friendship only through inertia, because I have no plans, and that her millions and her beauty leave me cold, she would be dumfounded; I believe that perhaps she would admire me.

"At present we devote ourselves to walking, talking, and telling each other our impressions. Any one would say that we intentionally play a game of being contrary; whatsoever she finds wonderful seems worthy of contempt to me, and vice-versa. It is strange that such absolute disagreement can exist.

. . . . . .

"This Sunday afternoon we have been taking a long walk, half sentimental, half archeological.

"I went to get her at her hotel; she came down, looking very smart, with an unmarried friend, also an American and also very chic.

"The three of us walked toward the Forum. We passed under the arch of Constantine. A small beggar-boy preceded us, getting ahead and turning hand-springs. I gave him some pennies. Susanna laughed. This woman, who pays bills of thousands of pesetas to her milliner, doesn't like to give a copper to a ragamuffin.

"We turned off a bit from the avenue and went up on the right, toward the Palatine. Among the ruins some women were pulling up plants and putting them into sacks. At the end of the road, on the slope, there were Stations of the Cross, and some boys from a school were playing, guarded by priests with white rabats.

"It was impossible to go further, and we went down the hill toward the Piazza di San Gregorio. On the open place in front of the church that is in this square, some vagabonds were stretched out on the ground; an old man with a long hoary beard and a pipe with a chain, two dark youths with shocks of black hair, and a red-headed woman with silver hoops in her ears and a baby in her arms.

"The two young boys threw me a glance of hatred, and stared at Susanna and her friend with extraordinary avidity.

"What very false ideas must have been going through their minds! I might have approached them and said politely:

"'Do not imagine that these ladies are of different stuff from this red woman who has the baby in her arms. They are all the same. There is no more difference than what is caused by a little soap and some money.'

"'Let us go in and see the church,' said Susanna.

"'Good. Come along.'

"The church has a flight of stone steps and two cypresses to one side.

"We went into a court with graves in it, and stayed there a

while, reading the names of the people buried in them. Susanna's friend is a sort of little devil with the instincts of a small boy, and she went springing about in all the corners.

"When we came out of the church we found the square, deserted before, now full of people. During the time we had stayed inside, a numerous group of tourists had formed a circle, and a gentleman was explaining in English what the Via Appia used to be.

"'These are the things that please you,' Susanna said to me, laughing.

"I answered with a joke. The truth is that no matter how many explanations I am given, an ancient Roman always seems a cardboard figure to me, or at most a marble figure. It is not possible to imagine how bored I used to be reading *Les Martyres* of Chateaubriand and that famous *Quo Vadis*.

"From the Piazza di San Gregorio we took a steep street, the 'Via di Santi Giovanni e Paolo,' which passes under an arch with several brick buttresses.

"We came out in a little square, in an angle of which there is an ancient arcaded tower, which has tiles set into the walls, some round and others the shape of a Greek cross.

"The modern portico of the church has columns and a grated door, which we found open. Over the door is a picture of Saint John and Saint Paul; on the sides of it two shields with the mitre and the keys. On one, set round about, are the Latin words: *Omnium rerum est vicisitudo;* on the other is written in Spanish: *Mi corazón arde en mucha llama.*

"'Is it Spanish?' Susanna asked me.

"'Yes.'

"'What does it mean?'

"I translated the phrase into English: 'My heart burns with a great flame'; and Susanna repeated it several times, and begged me to write it in her card-case.

"Her friend skimmed some pages in Baedeker and said:

"'It seems that the house of two saints martyred by Julian the Apostate is preserved here.'

"*I assured them* that that was an error. I happen to have

been reading just a few days ago a book about Julian the Apostate, and it turns out that that Emperor was an admirable man, good, generous, brave, full of virtues; but the Christians had reason for calumniating him and they calumniated him. All Julian's persecutions of Christians are logical repressions of people that were disturbing public order, and the phrase, *Vencisti, Galileo,* is a pious fraud. Julian was a philosopher, he loved science, hygiene, cleanliness, peace, in a world of hysterical worshippers of corpses, who wanted to live in ignorance, filth, and prayer.

" But Christianity, always a religion of hallucinated persons, of mystifiers, has never vacillated in singing the praises of parricides like Constantine, and in calumniating the memory of great men like Julian.

" Susanna and her friend considered that the question of whether Julian has been calumniated by history, or not, was of no importance.

" The truth is that I feel the same way.

" From the Via di Santi Giovanni e Paolo we came out into a small square by a church, which has a little marble ship in front of its porch. We saw that his street is named after the *Navicella.*

A ROYAL IDYLL

" By the side of the church of the Navicella, we passed the Villa Mattei, and Susanna wished to go in. What a beautiful property! What splendid terraces those in that garden are! What laurels! What lemon-trees! What old statues! What heavy shade of pines and live-oaks!

" Kennedy, who has an admirable knowledge of every corner of Rome, has told me that at the beginning of the XIX Century the Villa Mattei was the property of Godoy. King Charles IV and his wife were in Rome, living in the Barberini Palace, and they spent their days in the seclusion of the Villa Mattei; and while the favourite and the Queen, who had now become a harpy, walked in those poetical avenues, bordered with box and laurel, the good Bourbon, now an old man, walked behind them, his

forehead ornamented like a faun's, enchanted to watch them; I don't know whether he was playing the flute.

"Susanna's friend laughed at the thought of the good Charles IV, with his waistcoat and his long coat, and his satyr's excrescences, and his rural flute; but the allusion did not find favour with Susanna, whether because she thought of her husband's infidelities, or because she considered, that if her father gets to be the shoe-king, she will then have a certain spiritual relationship to the Bourbons. In the Villa Mattei we saw an *ediculo,* which rises at the edge of a terrace, amidst climbing plants. There, as an inscription says, Saint Philip Neri talked to his disciples of things divine. From the terrace one can see the Baths of Caracalla, and part of the Roman Campagna behind them.

"We came out of the Villa Mattei and left the Piazza della Navicella and came down through a place where there is a wall with arches, under which some beggars have built huts out of gasoline cans. There is an eating-place thereabouts called the Osteria di Porta Metronia.

"Susanna's friend consulted her book, and the result was that we found we were in the Vale of Egeria.

"From there we came out by a narrow road running along a wall, not a very high one, over which green laurel branches projected. We saw an obelisk at the end of the road, and the entablature of Saint John the Lateran. The group of statues, reddish brown, silhouetted against the sky, made a very strange effect.

"We started to go down by the Via di San Sisto Vecchio which also runs along by a wall. At the bottom of the slope there is a mill, with a deep race. Susanna's friend said she would enjoy bathing there.

"We came out, at nightfall, almost opposite the Baths of Caracalla.

"'They ought to knock these ruins down altogether,' I said

"'Why so?' asked Susanna.

"'*Because* they appear to be standing here to demonstrate *the uselessness* of human energy.'

"Susanna was very little interested as to whether human energy is useful or useless.

"I am, because my own energy forms a part of human energy, and for no other reason.

"We came back past the Forum, but today we did not come upon any funerals. To demand that somebody should die every day and his corpse be carried out at twilight to feed tourists' emotions, would, I think, be demanding too much.

"When we reached her hotel, Susanna let her friend go up first; and as soon as we were alone, she looked at me expressively, placing one hand on her breast, and said to me, in nasal Spanish:

"'*Mi corazón arde en mucha llama.*'

"I don't believe it."

XXIV

TOURIST INTERLUDE

TRAVELLING

"SUSANNA said to me: 'I have some inclination for you, but I don't know you well enough. If you feel the same way, come with me. Let us travel together.' I am with her, and nevertheless I am convinced that what I am doing is a piece of stupidity.

"We spent this Sunday morning in the train. In the country we saw men at work with great oxen that had long twisted horns. In a swampy field some labourers were draining the ground with great effort. From the train we saw the island of Elba, and Capraia, and the sea as blue as indigo.

"'*Mare nostro*,' said an elegant gentleman in a fluty voice, and pointed out something on the horizon which he said was Corsica, and he said that it can be seen from far away.

"While all we useless, unoccupied persons gathered in the dining-car, the people in the fields kept on working, bent over in the mud, draining the marshes.

"'What a lot of effort those poor devils have to make to keep us alive,' I said.

"'We are not kept alive by them,' retorted Susanna.

"'No, we live off of other slaves, who work for us,' I answered her. 'Those out there serve to feed the officers, the effeminate priestlings, all the people that take part in the theatrical performance of the Vatican. Those unfortunates help to uphold the eight basilicas and the three hundred odd churches of Rome.'

"*Susanna* shrugged her shoulders and smiled.

CLOSE TO

"Travelling with a woman one does not love, no matter how very pretty she is, produces a series of disenchantments. It seems as if one kept seeking defects and analysing them under the microscope. During these days that I have been accompanying Susanna, I have discovered a lot of physical and moral imperfections in her. There are moments in which she cannot conceal an egoism and brutality which are truly disagreeable; and besides, she is tyrannical, vain, and tries always to have her own way.

"We have been at Siena, which is a kind of Toledo, made up of narrow lanes. It was very hot. We were bored, especially she who has no artistic feeling.

"We have spent two days in Florence, a night in Bologna, another night at Milan, and after vacillating as to whether it would be better to go to Lake Como or to Switzerland, we have come to Geneva to spend a few days.

"Travelling like this in limited trains, one finds travelling more insipid than in any other fashion. All the sleeping-cars are alike, all the people alike, all the hotels alike. Really it is stupid.

"It is still more stupid travelling with a woman who attracts attention wherever she goes. She attracts attention, that is all; she doesn't awaken any liking. She cannot comprehend why, being a beautiful and distinguished woman, she has nobody who cares for her disinterestedly. She notices that all the smart young men who aim for her are simply coming to the beautiful rich woman.

"And she thinks they ought to be in ecstasies over her wit and over the repertory of ready-made phrases she keeps for conversation.

A TIRESOME HOTEL

"In this immense, luxurious hotel, situated two thousand odd metres above sea-level, as the announcement-cards stuck everywhere say, more than a hundred of us gather in the dining-

room at lunch-time. The greatest coolness, the most frozen composure reigns among us.

"It is obvious that, thus harboured and united by chance in this hotel, we disturb one another; a wall of prejudices and conventionalities separates us. The English old maids read their romantic novels; the German families talk among themselves; some Russian or other drinks champagne while he stares with vague and inexpressive eyes; and some swarthy man from a sultry country appears to be crushed by the lugubrious silence.

"Through the windows one can see Lake Leman, closed in near here by mountains, blue like a great turquoise, ploughed by white, triangular sails. From time to time one hears the strident noise of a steamboat's siren and the murmur of the funicular train.

A MODEST FAMILY

"To this ostentatious hotel a family of modest air came two days ago. It was a family made up of five persons; two ladies, one of them plain, thin, spectacled, the other plumper and short; a merry girl, smiling and rosy, and a melancholy little girl, with a waxen face. They were accompanied by a man with a distinguished, weary manner.

"They are all in mourning. They are English; they treat one another with an attractive affability. The short lady, mother of the two girls, was pressing the man's hand and caressing it, during lunch the first day. He kept smiling in a gentle, tired way. No doubt he was unable to stay here long, for he did not appear that evening, and the four females were alone in the dining-room.

"The two ladies and the fresh, blooming girl are much preoccupied about the pale little girl, so much so that they do not notice the interest they arouse among the guests. All the old 'misses,' loaded with jewels, watch the family in mourning, as if they were wondering: 'How come they here, if their position is not so good as ours? How dare they mix among us, not being in our class?'

"*And it is* a fact; they cannot be; there is something that

shows that this family is not rich. Besides, and this is extraordinary enough, it seems that they haven't come here to look down on others, or to give themselves airs, but to take walks and to look at the immaculate peaks of Mont Blanc. So one sees the two girls going out into the country without making an elaborate toilet, carrying a book or an orange in their hands, and coming back with bunches of flowers. . . .

TRAGEDY IN A HOTEL ROOM

"This morning at lunch only one of the ladies appeared in the dining-room.

"'Perhaps the others have gone off on some picnic,' thought I.

"In the evening at dinner, the tall woman with the glasses and the larger of the two girls were at table. They didn't eat, and disquietude was painted on their faces; the girl had flushed cheeks and swollen eyes.

"'What can be happening to them?' I asked myself.

"At that juncture, in came the short lady, with two vials of medicine in her hand, and put them on the table. By what I could hear of the conversation, she had just come from Lausanne, where she had gone for the doctor. The melancholy little girl, the one with the waxen face, must be ill.

"No doubt the family have come to Switzerland for the sake of the child, who is probably delicate, and have made a sacrifice to do so. That explains their modest air, and the rapid departure of the man who brought them.

"The three women gazed sadly at one another. What can the poor child have? I remember nothing about her, except her hair parted in the middle, and the pallid colour of her bloodless skin, and nevertheless it makes me sad to think that she is sick.

"I should like to offer myself to these women at this crisis; I should like to say to them: 'I am a humble person, without money; but if I could be useful to you in any way, I would do it with all my heart; and that is more than I would do for this gang covered with brilliants.'

"The German who eats at the next table to the family understands what is happening, and he leaves off eating to look at them, and then looks at me with his blue eyes. At last he shrugs his shoulders, lowers his head, and empties a glass of wine at one gulp.

"The three women rise and go to their rooms. One hears them coming and going in the corridor; then a waiter takes their dinner upstairs.

"And while the family are desolate up there, down here in the 'hall' the 'misses' keep on looking at one another contemptuously, exhibiting rings that sparkle on their fingers, and which would keep hundreds of people alive; and while they are weeping upstairs, down here a blond Yankee woman, with a large blue hat, a friend of Susanna's, who flirts with a youth from Chicago, is laughing heartily, showing a set of white teeth in which there shines a chip of gold.

SUSANNA DOES NOT UNDERSTAND

"I have spoken to Susanna about the poor English girl, who, they say, is dying; and she has bidden me not to tell her sad things. She cannot bear other people's suffering. She says she is more sensitive than others. How very comical!

"This fine lady, who thinks herself so witty and so sensitive, has an inner skin like a hippopotamus; she is covered with a magnificent egoism, which must be at least of galvanized steel. Her armour protects her against the action of other people's miseries and pains.

"This woman, so beautiful, is of a grotesque egotism; one understands her husband's despising her.

"I am leaving her with her millions and going away to Spain."

PART TWO

CASTRO DURO

I

ARRIVAL

CAESAR IN ACTION

DURING the night Caesar Moncada and Alzugaray chatted in the train. Alzugaray was praising this first Quixotic sally of his friend's.

"We are going to cross the Rubicon, Caesar," he said, as he got into the train.

"We shall see."

Many times Alzugaray had heard Caesar explain his plans, but he had no great confidence in their realization. Nor did this particular moment seem to him opportune for beginning the campaign. Everybody believed that the Liberal Ministry was stronger than ever; people were still away for the summer; nothing was doing.

Nevertheless, Caesar insisted that the crisis was imminent, and that it was the precise moment for him to enter politics. With this object he was taking a letter from Alarcos, the leader of the Conservatives, to Don Calixto García Guerrero.

"Your Don Calixto will be at San Sebastian or at some water-cure," said Alzugaray, taking his seat in the train.

"It's all the same to me. I intend to follow him until I find him," answered Caesar.

"And you are decided to run as a Conservative?"

"Of course."

"I hope you won't be sorry later."

"Pshaw! Later one jumps into the position that suits one. On these first rungs of political life, either you have to have great luck, or you have to go like a grasshopper, first here, then there. That is the take-off, and when you are there all the

ambitious mediocrities unite against you if you have any talent. Naturally, I do not intend to do anything to exhibit mine. Spanish politics are like a pond; a strong, healthy stick of wood goes to the bottom; a piece of bark or cork or a sheaf of straw stays on the surface. One has to disguise oneself as a cork."

"And later you will go on and make yourself known."

"Naturally. Since I find myself in the vein for making comparisons, I will say that in Spanish politics we have a case like those in the old comedies of intrigue, where the lackeys pretend to be gentlemen. When I am once among the gentlemen, I shall know how to prove that I am more a master than the people surrounding me."

"How conceited you are."

"The confidence one feels in oneself," said Caesar ironically.

"But have you really got it, or do you only pretend to have?"

"What matter whether I have it or haven't it, if I behave as if I had it?"

"It matters a lot. It matters whether you are calm or not in the moment of danger."

"Calmness is the muse that inspires me. I haven't it in my thoughts, but in active life you shall see me!"

The two friends stretched themselves out in their first-class compartment, and lay half asleep until dawn, when they got up again.

The train was running rapidly across the flat country; the yellow sunlight shone into the car; through the newly sowed fields rode men on horseback.

"These are not my dominions yet," said Caesar.

"We have two more stations till Castro Duro," responded Alzugaray, consulting the time-table. They took off their caps, put them into the bag, Caesar put on a fresh collar, and they sat down by the window.

"It is ugly enough, eh?" said Alzugaray.

"Naturally," replied Caesar. "What do you want; that there should be some of those green landscapes like in your country, which for my part irritate me?"

THE CLASSIC STAGECOACH

They arrived at Castro Duro. In the station they saw groups of peasants. The travellers with their baggage went out of the station. There were two shabby coaches at the door.

"Are you going to the Comercio?" asked one driver.

"No, they are going to the España," said the other.

"Then you two know more than we do," answered Alzugaray, "because we don't know where to go."

"To the Comercio!"

"To the España!"

"Whose coach is this one?" asked Caesar, pointing to the less dirty of the two.

"The Comercio's."

"All right, then we are going to the Comercio."

The coach, in spite of being the better of the two, was a rickety, worn-out old omnibus, with its windows broken and spotted. It was drawn by three skinny mules, full of galls. Caesar and Alzugaray got in and waited. The coachman, with the whip around his neck, and a young man who looked a bit like a seminarian, began to chat and smoke.

At the end of five minutes' waiting, Caesar asked:

"Well, aren't we going?"

"In a moment, sir."

The moment stretched itself out a good deal. A priest arrived, so fat that he would have filled the vehicle all alone; then a woman from the town with a basket, which she held on her knees; then the postman got in with his bag; the driver closed the little window in the coach door, and continued joking with the young man who looked a bit like a seminarian and with one of the station men.

"We are in a hurry," said Alzugaray.

"We are going now, sir. All right. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" answered the station man and the seminarian.

The driver got up on his seat, cracked his whip, and the vehicle began to move, with a noisy swaying and a trembling

of all its wood and glass. A very thick cloud of dust arose in the road.

"Ya, ya, Coronela!" yelled the driver. "Why do you keep getting where you oughtn't to get? Damn the mule! Montesina, I am going to give you a couple of whacks. Get on there, Coronela! Get up, get up. . . . All right! All right! . . . That's enough. . . . That's enough. . . . Let it alone, now! Let it alone, now!"

"What an amount of oratory that man is wasting," exclaimed Caesar; "he must think that the mules are going to go better for the efforts of his throat. It would be an advantage if he had stronger beasts, instead of these dying ones."

The other travellers paid no attention to his observation, and Alzugaray said:

"These drivers drip oratory."

While the shabby coach was going along the highway which encircles Castro hill, to the sound of the bells and the cracking of the whip, it was possible to remain seated in the vehicle with comparative ease; but on reaching the town's first steep, crooked, rough-cobbled street, the swinging and tossing were such that the travellers kept falling one upon another.

The first street kept getting rapidly narrower, and as it grew narrower, the crags in its paving were sharper and more prominent. At the highest part of the street, in the middle, stood a two-wheeled cart blocking the way. The coachman got down from his seat and started a long discussion with the carter, as to who was under obligations to make way.

"What idiots!" exclaimed Caesar, irritated; then, calmer, he murmured, addressing Alzugaray, "The truth is, these people don't care about doing anything but talk."

As the discussion between the coachman and the carter gave signs of never ending, Caesar said:

"Come along," and then, addressing the man with the bag, he asked him, "Is it far from here to the inn?"

"No; it is right here, in the house where the café is."

THE INN

Sure enough, the inn was only a step away. They went into the damp, dark entrance, up the crooked stairs, and down the corridor to the kitchen.

"Good morning, good morning!" they shouted.

Nobody appeared.

"Might it be on the second floor?" asked Alzugaray.

"Let's go see."

They went up to the next floor, entered by a gallery of red brick, which was falling to pieces, and called several times. An old woman, from inside a dark bedroom where she was sweeping, bade them go down to the dining-room, where she would bring them breakfast.

The dining-room had balconies toward the country, and was full of sun; the bedrooms they were taken to, on the other hand, were dark, gloomy, and cavernous. Alzugaray requested the old woman to show them the other vacant chambers, and chose two on the second floor, which were lighter and airier.

The old woman told them she hadn't wanted to take them there, because there was no paper on the walls.

"No doubt, in Castro, the prospect of bed-bugs is an agreeable prospect," said Caesar.

After he had washed and dressed, Caesar started out to find and capture Don Calixto, and Alzugaray went to take a stroll around the town. It was agreed that they should each explore the region in his own way.

II

CASTRO DURO

THE MORNING

IN these severe old Castilian towns there is one hour of ideal peace and serenity. That is the early morning. The cocks are still crowing, the sound of the church bells is scattered on the air, and the sun begins to penetrate into the streets in gusts of light. The morning is a flood of charity that falls upon the yellowish town.

The sky is blue, the air limpid, pure, and diaphanous; the transparent atmosphere scarcely admits effects of perspective, and its ethereal mass makes the outlines of the houses, of the belfries, of the eaves, vibrate. The cold breeze plays at the cross-streets, and amuses itself by twisting the stems of the geraniums and pinks that flame on the balconies. Everywhere there is an odour of cistus and of burning broom, which comes from the ovens where the bread is baked, and an odour of lavender that comes from the house entries.

The town yawns and awakes; some priests pass, on their way to church; pious women come out of their houses; and market men and women begin to arrive from the villages nearby. The bells make that *tilín-talán* so sad, which seems confined to these dead towns. In the main street the shops open; a boy hangs up the dresses, the sandals, the caps, on the façade, reaching them up with a stick. Droves of mules are seen in front of the grain-shops; some charcoal-burners go by, selling charcoal; and peasant women lead, by their halters, little burros loaded with jars and pans.

One hears all the hawksters' cries, all the clatter characteristic of that town. The milk-vendor, the honey-vendor, the

chestnut-vendor, each has his own traditional theme. The candlestick-maker produces a sonorous peal from two copper candlesticks, the scissors-grinder whistles on his flute. . . .

Then, at midday, hawksters and peasants disappear, the sun shines hotter, and the afternoon is tiresome and enervating.

FROM THE MIRADERO

Castro Duro is situated on a hill of red earth.

One goes up to the town by a dusty highway, with the remains of little trees which one Europeanizing mayor planted, and which all died; or else by zigzag paths, up which saddle-animals and beasts of burden usually go.

From the plain Castro Duro stands out in silhouette against the sky, between two high, many-sided edifices, one of a honey yellow, old and respectable, the church; the other white, overgrown, modern, the prison.

These two pillars of society are conspicuous from all sides, from whatsoever point on the plain one looks at Castro Duro.

The town was an old important city, and has, from afar, a seigniorial air; from nearby, on the contrary, it presents that aspect of caked dust which all the Castilian cities in ruin have; it is wide, spread out, formed for the most part of lanes and little squares, with low crooked houses that have blackish, warped roofs.

From the promenade beside the church, which is called the Miradero, one can see the great valley that surrounds Castro, a plain without an end, flat and empty. At the foot of the hill that supports the city, a broad river, which formerly kissed the old walls, marks a huge S with a sand border.

The water of the river covers the beach in winter, and leaves it half uncovered in summer. At intervals on the river banks grow little groves of poplar, which are mirrored on the tranquil surface of the water. A very long bridge of more than twenty arches crosses from one shore to the other.

The hill that serves as pedestal for the historic city has very different aspects; from one side it is seen terraced into steps,

formed of small parcels of land held up by rough stone walls. On these landings there are thickets of vines and a few almond-trees, which grow even out of the spaces between the stones.

On another part of the hill, called the Trenches, the whole ground is broken by great cuttings, which in other days were no doubt used for the defence of the city. Near the trenches are to be seen the remains of battlemented walls, tiles, and ruins of an ancient settlement, perhaps destroyed by the waters of the river which in time undermined its foundations.

From the Miradero one sees the bridge below, as from a balloon, with men, riding horses, and carts going over it, all diminished by the distance. Women are washing clothes and spreading them in the sun, and in the evening horses and herds of goats are drinking at the river brink.

The great plain, the immense flat land, contains cultivated fields, square, oblong, varying in colour with the seasons, from the light green of barley to the gold of wheat and the dirty yellow of stubble. Near the river are truck-gardens and orchards of almonds and other fruit trees.

In the afternoon, looking from the Miradero, from the height where Castro stands, one feels overcome by this sea of earth, by the vast horizon, and the profound silence. The cocks toss their metallic crowing into the air; the clock-bells mark the hours with a sad, slow clang; and at evening the river, brilliant in its two or three fiery curves, grows pale and turns to blue. On clear days the sunset has extraordinary magic. The entire town floats in a sea of gold. The Collegiate church changes from yellow to lemon colour, and at times to orange; and there are old walls which take on, in the evening light, the colour of bread well browned in the oven. And the sun disappears into the plain, and the Angelus bell sounds through the immense space.

THE TOWN

Castro Duro has a great many streets, as many as an important capital. By only circling the Square one can count the Main Street, Laurel Street, Christ Street, Merchants' Street,

Forge Street, Shoemakers' Street, Loafing Street, Penitence Wall, and Chain Street.

These streets are built with large brick houses and small adobe houses. Pointed cobbles form the pavement, and leave a dirty open sewer in the middle.

The large houses have two granite columns on their façades, on either side of the door, and these columns as well as the stones of the threshold take on a violet tinge from the lees of wine the inhabitants have the custom of putting on the sidewalks to dry.

Many of the big houses in Castro boast a large 'scutcheon over the door, little crazy towers with iron weather-cocks on the roof; and some of them a huge stork's nest.

The streets remote from the centre of town have no paving, and their houses are low, built of adobe, and continued by yards, over whose mud-walls appear the branches of fig-trees.

These houses lean forward or backward, and they have worn-out balconies, staircases which hold up through some prodigy of stability, and old grills, crowned with a cross and embellished with big flowers of wrought iron.

The two principal monuments of Castro Duro are the Great Church and the palace.

The Great Church is Romanesque, of a colour between yellow and brown, gilded by the sun. It stands high, at one extremity of the hill, like a sentinel watching the valley. The solid old fabric has rows of crenels under the roof, which shows its warlike character.

The principal dome and the smaller ones are ribbed, like almost all the Romanesque churches of Spain.

The round apse exhibits ornamental half columns, divers rosettes, and a number of raised figures, and masonic symbols. In the interior of the church the most notable thing to be seen is the Renaissance altar-piece and a Romanesque arch that gives entrance to the baptistery.

The second archeological monument of the town is the ancient palace of the Dukes of Castro Duro.

The *palace*, a great structure of stone and now blackened

brick, rises at the side of the town-hall, and has, like it, an arcade on the Square. In the central balcony there are monumental columns, and on top of them two giants of corroded stone, with large clubs, who appear to guard the 'scutcheon; one end of the building is made longer by a square tower.

The palace wears the noble air given to old edifices by the large spread of wall containing windows very far apart, very small, and very much ornamented.

From the inscriptions on its various 'scutcheons one can gather that it was erected by the Duke of Castro Duro and his wife, Doña Guiomar.

In the rear of the palace, like a high belvedere built on the rampart, there appears a gallery formed of ten round arches, supported on slender pilasters. Below the gallery are the remains of a garden, with ramps and terraces and a few old statues. The river comes almost to the foot of the gardens.

Today the palace belongs to Don Calixto García Guerrero, Count de la Sauceda.

Don Calixto and his family have no necessity for the whole of this big palace to live in, and have been content to renovate the part fronting on the Calle Mayor. They have had new belvederes built in, and have given over the apartments looking on the Square and the Calle del Cristo to the Courts and the school.

Another great building, which astonishes every one that stops over at Castro Duro, by its size, is the Convent of la Merced. It has been half destroyed by a fire. In the groins there remain some large Renaissance brackets, and in one wing of the edifice, inhabited by the nuns, there are windows with jalousies and a rather lofty tower terminating in a weather-cock and a cross.

LIFE AT CASTRO

Castro Duro is principally a town of farmers and carriers. Its municipal limits are very extensive; the plain surrounding it is fertile enough. In winter there are many foggy days, and *then the flat* land looks like a sea, in which hillocks and groves *float like islands.*

Wine and cultivated fruits constitute the principal riches of Castro. The wine is sharp, badly made; there is one thick dark variety which always tastes of tar, and one light variety which they reinforce with alcohol and which they call *aloque*.

Autumn is the period of greatest animation in the town; the harvest gets stowed away, the vintage made, the sweet almonds are gathered and shelled in the porticoes.

Formerly in all the houses of rich and poor, the murk of the grapes was boiled in a still and a somewhat bitter brandy thus manufactured. Whether in consequence of the brandy, or of the unusual amount of money about, or of both, the fact is that at that period a great passion for gambling developed in Castro and more crimes were committed then than during all the rest of the year.

The industrial processes in Castro are primitive; everything is made by hand, and the Castrian people imagine that this establishes a superiority. In the environs of the town there are an electrical plant, a brickyard, various mills, and lime and plaster kilns.

The town's commerce is more extended than its industries, although no more prosperous. In the Square and in the Calle Mayor, under the arcades white goods are sold and woollens, and there are hat-shops and silversmiths, one alongside the other. The shopkeepers hang their merchandise in the arches, the saddlers and harness-makers decorate their entrances with head-stalls and straps, and those that have no archway put up awnings. In the Square there are continually stalls set up for earthenware jars and pitchers and for articles in tin.

In the outlying streets there are inns, at whose doors five or six mules with their heads together are almost constantly to be seen; there are crockery stores containing brooms and every kind of jug and glazed pan; there are little shops in doorways holding big baskets full of grain; there are dark taverns, which are also eating-houses, to which the peasants go to eat on market days, and whose signs are strings of dried pimentoes and cayenne peppers or an elm branch. In the written signs there is a truly Castilian charm, chaste and serene. At the Riojano oven one

reads: "'Bred' baked for all 'commers.'" And at the Campico inn it says: "Wine served by Furibis herself." The shops and the inns have picturesque names too. There is the Sign of the Moor, and the Sign of the Jew, and the Sign of the Lion, and one of the Robbers.

The streets of Castro, especially those near the centre, where the crowd is greater, are dirty and ill-smelling in summer. Clouds of flies hover about and settle on the pairs of blissfully sleeping oxen; the sun pours down his blinding brilliance; not a soul passes, and only a few greyhounds, white and black, elegant and sad, rove about the streets. . . .

In all seasons, at twilight, a few young gentlemen promenade in the Square. At nine at night in the winter, and at ten in summer, begins the reign of the watchmen with their dramatic and lamentable cry.

. . . . . .

Alzugaray gave Caesar these details by degrees, while they were both seated in the hotel getting ready to dine.

"And the type? The ethnic type? What is it, according to you?" asked Caesar.

"A type rather thin than fat, supple, with an aquiline nose, black eyes. . . ."

"Yes, the Iberian type," said Caesar, "that is how it struck me too. Tall, supple, dolichocephalic. . . . It seems to me one can try to put something through in this town. . . ."

III

CAESAR'S LABOURS

FIRST STEPS

"AND what have you been doing all day? Tell me."

"I think, my dear Alzugaray," said Caesar, "that I can say, like my namesake Julius: '*Veni, vidi, vici.*'"

"The devil! The first day?"

"Yes."

"Show me. What happened?"

"I left the house and entered the café downstairs. There was no one there but a small boy, from whom I ordered a bottle of beer and asked if there was a newspaper published here. He told me yes, the *Castro Mail,* an independent weekly. I bade him fetch me a copy, even an old one, and he brought me these two. I gave them a glance, and then, as if it didn't interest me much, I questioned the lad about Don Calixto.

"The first impression I obtained was that Don Calixto is the most influential person in the town; the second, that besides him, either with him or against him, there is a Señor Don Platón Peribáñez, almost as influential as Don Calixto. Afterwards I read the two numbers of the Castro periodical attentively, and from this reading I gathered that there is a somewhat hazy question here about an Asylum, where it seems some irregularities have been committed. There is a Republican book-dealer, who is a member of the Council, and on whom the Workmen's Club depends, and he has asked for information as to the facts from the Municipality, and the followers of Don Calixto and of Don Platón oppose this suggestion as an attack on the good-birth, the honour, and the reputation of such respectable personages.

"Having verified these pieces of news, which are of interest for me, I packed off to church and heard the whole eleven o'clock mass."

"Mighty good! You are quite a man."

"Mass ended, I went over to the Baptistery arch and stood there examining it, as if I felt the most terrible symptoms of enthusiasm for carved stone. Afterwards I went into the big chapel, which serves also as a pantheon for the Dukes of Castro Duro, whose tombs you find in the side niches of the presbytery. These niches are decorated with an efflorescence of Gothic, which is most gay and pretty, and among all this stone filigree you see the recumbent statues of a number of knights and one bishop, who to judge by his sword must have been a warrior too.

"Nobody remained in the church; the priest, a nice old man, fixed his eyes on me and asked me what I thought of the arch. And having prepared my lesson, I talked about the Romanesque of the XII and XIII Centuries like a professor, and then he took me into the sacristy and showed me two paintings on wood which I told him were XV Century.

"'So they say,' the priest agreed. 'Do you think they are Italian or German?'

"'Italian certainly, North Italian.' I might as well have said South German, but I had to decide for something.

"'And they must be worth . . . ?' he then asked me with eagerness.

"'My dear man; according,' I told him. 'A dealer would offer you a hundred or two hundred pesetas apiece. In London or New York, well placed, they might be worth twenty or thirty thousand francs.'

"The 'pater' shot fire out of his eyes.

"'And what would one have to do about it?' he asked me.

"'My dear man, I think one would have to take some good photographs and send them to various trades-people and to the museums in the United States.'

"'*Would it* be necessary to write in English?'

"'*Yes, it* would be the most practical thing.'

"'I don't think there is anybody here that knows how. . . .'

"'I would do it, with great pleasure.'

"'But are you going to be here for some time?'

"'Yes, it is probable.'

"He asked me what I came to Castro Duro for, and I told him that I had no other object than to visit Don Calixto García Guerrero.

"Astonishment on the priest's face.

"'You know him?'

"'Yes, I met him in Rome.'

"'Do you know where he lives?'

"'No.'

"'Then I will take you.'

"The priest and I went out into the street. He wanted to give me the sidewalk, and I opposed that as if it were a crime. He told me he was more accustomed than I to walking on the cobble-stones; and finally, he on the sidewalk and I in the gutter, we arrived at Don Calixto's house."

. . . . . .

"Was he at home?" asked Alzugaray.

"Yes," said Caesar. "By the way, on the road there we bowed to the present Deputy to the Cortes, he who will be my opponent in the approaching election, Señor García Padilla."

"Dear man! What a coincidence! What sort is he?"

"He is tall, with a reddish aquiline nose, a greyish moustache, full of cosmetic, a poor type."

"He is a Liberal?"

"Yes, he is a Liberal, because Don Calixto is a Conservative. In his heart, nothing."

"Good. Go on."

DON CALIXTO AT HOME

"As I was saying, Don Calixto was at home, in a large room on the ground floor, which serves as his office. Don Calixto is a tall, supple man, with the blackest of hair which is beginning to turn white on the temples, and a white moustache. He is at the romantic age of illusions, of hopes. . . ."

"How old is he?" asked Alzugaray.

"He isn't more than fifty-four," Caesar replied, sarcastically. "Don Calixto dresses in black, very fastidiously, and the effect is smart, but smacks of the notary. No matter what pains he takes to appear graceful and easy in manner, he doesn't achieve the result; he has the inbred humility of one who has taken orders in a shop, either as a lad or as a man.

"Don Calixto received me with great amiability, but with a certain air of reserve, as if to say: 'In Rome I was a merry comrade to you, here I am a personage.' We chatted about a lot of things, and before he could ask me what I wanted, I pulled out the letter and handed it to him. The old man put on his glasses, read attentively, and said:

"'Very good, very good; we will discuss it later.'

"The priest of course thought that he was in the way, and he left.

"When we were alone, Don Calixto said:

"'All right, Caesar, I am happy to see you. I see that you remember our conversation in Rome. You must have lunch with me and my family.'

"'With great pleasure.'

"'I'll go and tell them to put on another place.'

"Don Calixto went out and left me alone. For a while I studied the boss's office. On the wall, diplomas, appointments, in looking-glass frames; a genealogical tree, probably drawn day before yesterday; in a book-case, legal books. . . .

"Don Calixto came back; he asked me if I was tired, and I told him no, and when we had crossed the whole width of the house, which is huge, he showed me the garden. My boy, what a wonderful spot! It hangs over the river and it is a marvel. The highest part, which is the part they keep up, isn't worth much; it is in lamentable style; just imagine, there is a fountain which is a tin negro that spurts out water from all parts.

"However, the old part of the garden, the lower part, is lovely. There is a big tower standing guard over the river, now converted *into* a belvedere, with pomegranates, rose-bushes, and

climbing plants all around it, and above all, there is an oleander that is a marvel . . .; it looks like a fire-work castle or a shower of flowers."

. . . . . .

"Leave that point," said Alzugaray. "You are talking like a poor disciple of Ruskin's."

"You are right. But when you see those gardens, you will be enthusiastic, too."

"Get ahead."

THE POLITICAL POWERS OF CASTRO

"During our promenade Don Calixto talked to me of the immense good he has done for the town and of the ingratitude he constantly receives for it.

"While I listened, I recalled a little periodical in Madrid which had no other object than to furnish bombs at reasonable prices, and which said, speaking of a manufacturer in Catalonia: 'Señor So-and-so is the most powerful boss in the province of Tarragona, and even at that there are those who dispute his bossdom.'

"Don Calixto is astonished that when he has done the Castrians the honour to make them loans at eighty or ninety per-cent, they are not fond of him. After the garden we saw the house; I won't tell you anything about it, I don't want you to accuse me again of being a Ruskinian.

"When we reached the dining-room Don Calixto said: 'I am going to present you to my family.'

"Thereupon, entrance, ceremonies, bows on my part, smiles . . . *toute la lyre.* Don Calixto's wife is an insignificant fat woman; the two daughters insipid, ungainly, not at all pretty; and with them was a little girl of about fifteen or sixteen, a niece of Don Calixto's, a veritable little devil, named Amparo. This Amparo is a tiny, flat-faced creature, with black eyes, and extraordinarily vivacious and mischievous. During dinner I succeeded in irritating the child.

"I talked gravely with Don Calixto and his wife and daughters about Madrid, about the theatrical companies that come to this town, about their acquaintances at the Capital.

"The child interrupted us, bringing us the cat and putting a little bow on him, and then making him walk on the key-board of the piano.

"At half-past one we went to the dining-room. Dinner was kilometres long; and the conversation turned on Rome and Paris. Don Calixto drank more and more, I, too; and at the end of the meal there was a bit of toasting, from which my political intentions were made manifest.

"The elder daughter, whose name is Adela, asked me if I liked music. I told her yes, almost closing my eyes, as if deliriously, and we went into the drawing-room. Without paying attention, I listened, during the horrors of digestion, to a number of sonatas, now and then saying: 'Magnificent! How wonderful that is!'

"The father was enchanted, the mother enchanted, the sister likewise; the little girl was the one who stared at me with questioning black eyes. She must have been thinking: 'What species of bird is this?' I believe the damned child realized that I was acting a comedy.

"About four the ladies and I went out into the garden. Don Calixto has the habit of taking an afternoon nap, and he left us. I succeeded in bringing myself to, in the open air. Don Calixto's wife showed me over an abandoned part of the house, in which there is an old kitchen as big as a cathedral, with a stone chimney like a high altar, with the arms of the Dukes of Castro. We chatted, I was very pleasant to the mother, courteous to the daughters, and coldly indifferent with the little niece. I was bored, after having exhausted all subjects of conversation, when Don Calixto reappeared and carried me off to his office.

"The conference was important; he explained the situation of the Conservative forces of the district to me. These forces are represented, principally, by three men: Don Calixto, a Señor *Don Platón*, and a friar. Don Calixto represents the modern

Conservative tendency and is, let us say, the Cánovas of the district; with him are the rich members of the Casino, the superior judge, the doctors, the great proprietors, etc. Don Platón Peribáñez, a silversmith in the Calle Mayor, represents the middle-class Conservatives; his people are less showy, but more in earnest and better disciplined; this Platonian or Platonic party is made up of chandlers, silversmiths, small merchants, and the poor priests. The friar, who represents the third Conservative nucleus, is Father Martín Lafuerza. Father Martín is prior of the Franciscan monastery, which was established here after the Order was expelled from Filinas.

"Father Martín is an Ultramontanist up to the eyes. He directs priests, friars, nuns, sisters, and is the absolute master of a town nearby called Cidones, where the women are very pious.

"Despite their piety, the reputation of those ladies cannot be very good, because there is a proverb, certainly not very gallant: 'Don't get either a wife or a mule at Cidones; neither a wife nor a mule nor a pig at Griñón.'

"Opposed to these three Conservative nuclei are the friends of the present Deputy, who amount to no more than the official element, which is always on the ruling side, and a small guerilla band that meets in the Workingmen's Casino, and is composed principally of a Republican bookseller, an apothecary who invents explosives, also Republican, an anarchist doctor, a free-thinking weaver, and an innkeeper whom they call Furibis, who is also a smuggler and a man with hair on his chest.

DON PLATÓN PERIBÁÑEZ

"After having given me these data, Don Calixto told me that by counting on Señor Peribáñez, the election was almost sure; and since the quicker things go the better, he proposed that we should go to see him, and I immediately agreed.

"Don Platón Peribáñez has a silver-shop fitted up in the old style; a small show-window, full of rattles, Moorish anklets, necklaces, little crosses, et cetera; a narrow, dark shop, then a

long passage, and at the rear, a workroom with a window on a court.

"As his assistant in the silver-shop, Don Platón has a boy who is a nonsuch. I believe that if you took him to London and exhibited him, saying beforehand: 'Bear in mind, gentlemen, that this is not a monkey or an anthropoid, but a man,' you would rake in a mad amount of pounds sterling.

"We went into Don Platón's little shop, we asked the young macaco for him, and we passed on into the workshop.

"Señor Peribáñez is a man of medium stature, dressed in black, with a trimmed white beard, grey eyes, and modest manners. He speaks coldly, thinks closely of what he is saying; he has a monotonous, slow voice, and nothing escapes him.

"Don Calixto presented me to him; the silversmith gave me his hand as if with a certain repugnance, and the boss explained who I was and what I was after.

"Don Platón said that he could not reply categorically without consulting with his friends and with Father Martín. The Father has other candidates; one the Duke of Castro himself; and the other a rich farmer of the town.

"The Duke of Castro presents no other drawback than that he has been arrested in Paris for an insignificant swindle he has committed; but it seems that a rich Cuban wants to get him out of his difficulties on condition that he will marry his daughter.

"If he comes out of jail and gets married, then they will nominate him as Deputy from here.

"I said to Don Platón, in case the worthy Duke does not come out of jail, would he have difficulties over my being his candidate. He replied that I am very young, and after many circumlocutions he said flatly that he doesn't know if I would be accepted or not as a candidate by his followers; but in case I were, the conditions precedent would be: first, that I would not interfere in any way in the affairs of the district, which would be ventilated in the town, as previously; secondly, that I should bear the costs of the election, which would amount approximately to some ten thousand pesetas.

"*Don Calixto* looked at me questioningly, and I smiled in a

way to make it understood that I agreed, and after extracting a promise from Don Platón that he will give us a definite answer this week, we took leave of him and went to the Casino.

"There I was introduced to the judge, an Andalusian who has a spotless reputation for veniality, and to the mayor, who is a rich farmer; and the most important persons of the town being thus gathered at one table, we chatted about politics, women, and gambling.

"I told them a number of tales; I told them that I once lost ten thousand dollars at Monte Carlo, playing with two Russian princes and a Yankee millionairess; I talked to them about the mysteries and crimes of gambling houses and of those great centres of pleasure, and I left them speechless. At half-past nine, with a terrible headache, I came back here. I think I have not lost a day, eh?"

"No! The devil! What speed!" exclaimed Alzugaray. "But you are not eating any supper. Don't you intend to take anything?"

"No. I am going to see if I can sleep. Listen, day after tomorrow we are both invited to dine at Don Calixto's."

"Me, too?"

"Yes; I told them that you are a rich tourist, and they want to know you."

"And what am I to do there?"

"You can study these people, as an entomologist studies insects. Listen, it wouldn't do any harm if you took a walk to that town near here, named Cidones, to see if you can find out what sort of bird this Father Martín is."

"All right."

"And if you don't mind, go into that Republican bookseller's shop, under any pretext, and talk to him."

"I will do so."

"Then, till tomorrow!"

"You are going now?"

"Yes."

"Goodnight, then."

Caesar left his room and marched off to sleep.

IV

THE BOOKSELLER AND THE ANARCHISTS

THE following day, very early in the morning, Alzugaray went to a livery-stable which they had directed him to at the hotel, and asked to hire a horse. They brought him a large, old one; he mounted, and crossed the town more slowly than if he had been on foot, and set out for Cidones.

On reaching that town, he left the horse at a blacksmith's and went up through the narrow lanes of Cidones, which are horribly long, dark, and steep.

Then he ascended to la Peña, the rock on which the Franciscan monastery stands; but was unable to obtain any fresh information about Father Martín and his friars. The people with whom he talked were not disposed to unbosom themselves, and he preferred not to insist, so as not to be suspected.

Afterwards he went down to Cidones again and returned to Castro Duro. Caesar was still in bed. Alzugaray went into his room.

"Don't you intend to get up?" he asked him.

"No."

"Don't you intend to eat, either?"

"Neither."

"Are you sick?"

"No."

"What is the matter with you? Laziness?"

"Something like that."

Alzugaray ate alone, and after he had had coffee, he directed his steps to the bookstore of the Republican councilman, of *whom* Caesar had spoken to him. He found it in a corner of

the Square; and it was at the same time a stationer's shop and a newsdealer's. Behind the counter were an old man and a lad.

Alzugaray went in. He bought various Madrid periodicals from the lad, and then addressing the old man, asked him:

"Haven't you some sort of a map of the province, or of the neighbourhood of Castro Duro?"

"No, sir, there isn't one."

"Nor a guidebook, perhaps?"

"Nor that either. At the townhall we have a map of the town. . . ."

"Only of the part built up?"

"Yes."

"Then it would do me no good."

"You want a map for making excursions, eh?"

"That's it. Yes."

"Well, there is none. We are very much behind the times."

"Yes, that's true. It wouldn't cost very much, and it would be useful for ever, both to the people here and to strangers."

"Just tell that to our town government!" exclaimed the old bookseller. "Whatever is not for the advantage of the rich and the clerical element, there is no hope of."

"Those gentlemen have a great deal of influence here?" asked Alzugaray.

"Uf! Enormous. More every day."

"But there don't appear to be many convents."

"No, there are not many convents; but there is one that counts for a hundred, and that is the one at Cidones."

"Why is that?"

"Because it has a wild beast for a prior. Father Martín Lafuerza. He is famous all through this region. And he is a man of talent, there's no denying it, but despotic and exigent. He is into everything, catechizes the women, dominates the men. There is no way to fight against him. Here am I with this bookshop, and I have my pension as a lieutenant, which gives me enough to live very meanly, and with what little I get out of the *periodicals* I scrape along. Besides, I am a Republican

and very liberal, and I like propaganda. If I didn't, I should have left all this long ago, because they have waged war to the death on me, an infamous sort of war which a person that lives in Madrid cannot understand; calumnies that come from no one knows where, atrocious accusations, everything. . . ."

Alzugaray stared at the bookseller's grey eyes, which were extraordinarily bright. The old man was tall, stooped, grizzled, with a prominent nose and a beard trimmed to a point.

"But you have stuck firmly to your post," said Alzugaray.

"Having been a soldier must do something for a man," replied the bookseller. "He learns not to draw back in the face of danger. And this is my life. Now I am a councillor and I work at the town hall as much as I can, even though I know I shall accomplish nothing. Grafting goes on before my face, I know it exists, and yet it is impossible to find it. Six months ago I informed the judge of irregularities committed in a Sisters' Asylum, things I had proof of. . . . The judge laid my information on the table, and things went on as if nothing had happened."

"Spain is in a bad way. It is a pity!" exclaimed Alzugaray.

"You people in Madrid, and I don't say this to irritate you, do not understand what goes on in the small towns."

"My dear man, I have never taken any part in political affairs."

"Well, I think that everybody ought to take part in politics, because it is for the general interest."

At this moment two persons entered the bookshop. Alzugaray was going to leave, but the bookseller said to him:

"If you have nothing to do, sit down for a while."

Alzugaray sat down and examined the new arrivals. One of them was a skinny man, with bushy hair and whiskers; the other was a smooth-shaven party, short, cross-eyed, dressed in copper-coloured cloth edged with broad black braid.

"*The Rebel* hasn't come?" asked the whiskered one.

"No," replied the bookseller. "It didn't come out this *week.*"

"*They* must have reported it," said the whiskered one.

"Yes, probably."

"Has the doctor been in?" the shaven little man with the black braid asked in his turn.

"No."

"All right. Let's go see if we can find him in the club. Salutations!"

"Good-bye."

"Who are those rascals?" asked Alzugaray, when they had gone out.

"They are two anarchists that we have here, who accuse me of being a bourgeois . . . ha . . . ha. . . . The shaven one is the son of the landlady of an inn who is called Furibis, and they call him that too. He used to be a Federalist. They call the other one 'Whiskers,' and he came here from Linares, not long ago."

"What do they do?"

"Nothing. They sit in the club chatting, and nowadays the doctor we have here runs with them, Dr. Ortigosa, who is half mad. He will be in soon. Then you will see a type. He is a very bad-tempered man, and is always looking for an excuse to quarrel. But above all, he is an enemy of religion. He never says Good-bye, but Salutations or Farewell. In the same way, he doesn't say Holy Week, but Clerical Week. His great pleasure is to find a temperament of a fibre like his own; then his eyes flash and he begins to swear. And if he is hit, he stands for it."

"He is an anarchist, too?"

"How do I know? He doesn't know himself. Formerly, for four or five months, he got out a weekly paper named *The Protest,* and sometimes he wrote about the canalization of the river, and again about the inhabitants of Mars."

The bookseller and Alzugaray chatted about many other things, and after some while the bookseller said:

"Here is Dr. Ortigosa. He is coming in."

The door opened and a slim individual appeared, worn and sickly, with a black beard and spectacles. His necktie was crooked, his suit dirty, and he had his hat in his hand.

He stared impertinently at Alzugaray, cast a glance at a newspaper, and set to shouting and talking ill of everything.

"This is a town full of dumb beasts," he said from time to time, with the energy of exasperation.

Then, supposing Alzugaray to come from Madrid, he started to speak ill of the Madrileños.

"They are a collection of fools," he said roundly, various times. "They know nothing, they understand nothing, and still they talk authoritatively about everything."

Alzugaray put up with the downpour as if it had no reference to him, looking over a newspaper; and when the doctor was in the thick of his discourse, Alzugaray got up, shook hands with the bookseller, thanked him, and left the shop.

The doctor looked at him over his glasses with fury, and began to walk up and down in the bookstore.

Alzugaray went to the hotel, arranging in his memory the data collected.

Caesar was feeling well, and the two of them talked of the bookseller and his friends and of Father Martín Lafuerza.

"I am going to jot down all these points," said Caesar. "It wouldn't be a bad idea for you to go on cultivating the bookseller."

"I am going to."

"Tomorrow, you know," said Caesar. "Grand dinner at Don Calixto's. The practical manœuvres begin."

"Very good."

V

THE BANQUET

THE GUESTS

THE table had been set in that wonderful gallery of the ancient palace of the Dukes of Castro Duro, which looked out over the garden. The early autumn weather was of enchanting softness and sweetness.

Caesar and Alzugaray were very smart and elegant, with creases in their trousers: Caesar dressed in black, with the ceremonious aspect that suits a grave man; Alzugaray in a light suit with a coloured handkerchief in his breast pocket.

" I think we are ' gentlemen ' today," said Caesar.

" It seems so to me."

They entered the house and were ushered into the drawing-room. The majority of the guests were already there; the proper introductions and bows took place. Caesar stayed in the group of men, who remained standing, and Alzugaray went over to enter the sphere of Don Calixto's wife and the judge's wife.

The judge, from the first moment, treated Caesar like a man of importance, and began to call him Don Caesar every moment, and to find everything he said, good.

In the ladies' group there was an old priest, a tall, big, deaf man, a great friend of the family, named Don Ramón.

The judge's wife told Alzugaray that this Don Ramón was a simpleton.

He was the pastor of a very rich hermitage nearby, the hermitage of la Vega, and he had spent all the money he had got by an inheritance, in fixing up the church.

The poor man was childlike and sweet. He said various times that he had many cloaks for the Virgin in the sacristy

of his church, and that he wished they could be given to poor parishes, because two or three were enough in his.

AMPARITO

While they were talking an automobile horn was heard, and a little later Don Calixto's niece entered the drawing-room.

This was Amparito, the flat-faced girl with black eyes, of whom Caesar had spoken to Alzugaray. Her father accompanied her.

The priest patted the girl's cheeks.

Her father was a clumsy man, red, sunburned, with the face of a contractor or a miner.

The girl took off her cap and the veil she wore in the automobile, and seated herself between Don Calixto's daughters. Alzugaray looked her over. Amparito really was attractive; she had a short nose, bright black eyes, red lips too thick, white teeth, and smooth cheeks. She wore her hair down, in ringlets; but in spite of her infantile get-up, one saw that she was already a woman.

"Caesar is right; this is quite a lively girl," murmured Alzugaray.

The mayor's son now arrived, and his sister. He was an insignificant little gentleman, mild and courteous; he had studied law at Salamanca, and it seemed that he had certain intentions about Don Calixto's second daughter.

All the guests being assembled, the master of the house said that, since nobody was missing and it was time, they might pass into the gallery, where the table was set.

At one end the lady of the house seated herself, having the priest on one side and the judge on the other; at the other end, Don Calixto, between the judge's wife and the mayor's daughter. Caesar had a seat assigned between Don Calixto's elder daughter and Amparito, and Alzugaray one between the second daughter and the judge's girl.

A few moments before they sat down, Amparito went running *out of the gallery* into the garden.

"Where has that child gone?" asked Don Calixto's wife.

"Something or other has occurred to her," said Amparito's father, laughing.

The girl reappeared a little later with a number of yellow and red chrysanthemums in her hand.

She gave red ones to the mayor's daughter and to her cousins, who were all three brunettes, and a yellow one to the judge's daughter, who was blond. Then she proceeded to the men.

"This one is for you," to the mayor's son; "this one for you," and she gave Alzugaray a yellow one; "this one for you," and she gave Caesar a red one; "and this one for me," and she put a similar flower in her bosom.

"And the rest of us?" asked Don Calixto.

"I don't give you chrysanthemums, because your wives would be jealous," replied Amparito.

"Man, man!" exclaimed the judge; "how does it strike you, Don Calixto? That these little girls know the human heart pretty well?"

"These children do not know how to appreciate our merits," said Don Calixto.

"Oh, yes; your merits are for your wives," replied Amparito.

"I must inform you that my friend Caesar is married, too," said Alzugaray, laughing.

"Pshaw!" she exclaimed, smiling and showing her white, strong teeth. "He hasn't the face of a married man."

"Yes, he has got the face of a married man. Look at him hard."

"Very well; as his wife isn't here, she won't quarrel with me."

Alzugaray examined this girl. She had great vivacity; any idea that occurred to her was reflected in her face in a manner so lively and charming, that she was an interesting spectacle to watch.

At first the conversation was of a languid and weary character; Don Calixto, the judge, and Caesar started in to exchange political reflexions of crass vulgarity. Caesar was gallantly attentive to the wants of Don Calixto's elder daughter, and less

gallantly so to his other neighbour Amparito; the mayor's son, despite the fact that his official mission was to court one of Don Calixto's girls, looked more at Amparito than at his intended, and Alzugaray listened smilingly to the young person's sallies.

Toward the middle of the meal the conversation grew brisker; the judge recounted, with much art, a mysterious crime that had occurred in a town in Andalusia among farming people, and he succeeded in keeping them all hanging to his lips.

At the end of the recital, the conversation became general; the younger element talked together, and Caesar made comments about what the judge had told them, and defended the most immoral and absurd conclusions, as though they were Conservative ideas.

Caesar's observations were discussed by the men, and the judge and Don Calixto agreed that Caesar was a man of real talent, who would play a great rôle in Congress.

"Please give me a little wine," said Amparito, holding her glass to Alzugaray; "your friend pays no attention to me; I have asked him for some wine twice, and nothing doing."

Caesar acted as if he hadn't heard and kept on talking; Amparito took the glass, wet her lips in it, and looked at Alzugaray maliciously.

After eating and having coffee, as the two married ladies and the girls were inert from so long a meal, they arose, and Alzugaray, the mayor's son, and Amparito's father followed them. Don Calixto, the judge, and Caesar remained at table. The priest had gone to sleep.

A bottle of chartreuse was brought, and they started in drinking and smoking.

Caesar's throat grew dry and he became nauseated from drinking, smoking, and talking.

At five the judge took his leave, because he had to glance in at court; Don Calixto wanted to take his nap, and after he had escorted Caesar to the garden, he went away. The two married ladies were alone, because the young people had gone with Amparito's father on an excursion to the Devil's Thresh-

old, a defile where the river flows between some red precipitous rocks full of clefts.

Caesar joined the two ladies, and kept up a monotonous, dreary conversation about the ways of the great city.

At twilight all the excursionists came back from their jaunt. One of the young ladies played something very noisy on the piano, and the judge's daughter was besought to recite one of Campoamor's poems.

"It is a very pretty thing," said the judge's wife, "a girl who laments because her lover abandons her."

"Given the customs of Spain, as they are, the girl would be in a house of prostitution," said Caesar in a low tone, ironically.

"Shut up," replied Alzugaray.

The girl recited the poem, and Caesar asked Alzugaray sarcastically if those verses were by the girl's father, because they sounded to him like the verses of a notary or a judge of the Court of First Instance.

Then somebody suggested that they should have supper there.

Caesar noticed that this plan did not appeal to the mistress of the house, and he said:

"One should be moderate in all things. I am going home to bed."

After this somewhat pedantic phrase, which to Don Calixto seemed a pearl, Caesar took leave of his new acquaintances with a great deal of ceremony and coolness. Alzugaray said he would remain a while longer.

When Caesar was bowing to Amparito, she asked him jokingly:

"Is it your wife that keeps you in such good habits?"

"My wife!" exclaimed Caesar, surprised.

"Didn't your friend say . . ."

"Ah! Yes, it is she who makes me have such good habits."

This said, he left the drawing-room and went quickly down the stairs. The cool night air made him shiver, and he went with a heavy, aching head to his hotel, and got to bed. He slept very profoundly, but not for more than an hour, and woke up sweaty and thirsty.

His headache was gone. It was not yet past eleven. He lighted the light, and sitting up in bed, set to thinking over the probabilities of success in his undertaking.

Meanwhile he stared at the red chrysanthemum which was in the button-hole of his coat, and remembered Amparito.

"That child is a prodigy of coquetry and bad bringing-up," he thought with vexation; "these emancipated small town young ladies are more unattractive than any others. I prefer Don Calixto's daughter, who at least is naïvely and unobjectionably stupid. But this other one is unsupportable."

Without knowing why, he felt more antipathy for the girl than was natural under the circumstances. He did not like to admit it to himself; but he felt the hostility which is produced in strong, self-willed characters by the presence of another person with a strong character proposing to exert itself.

THE TWO FRIENDS' COMMENTS

Caesar was thinking over the details of the visit, when Alzugaray came home, and seeing a light in Caesar's room, went in there. Alzugaray was quite lively. The two friends passed the persons met that day in ironic review, and in general they were agreed about everything, except about valuing Amparito's character.

Caesar found her distasteful, pert and impertinent; to his friend, on the contrary, she had seemed very attractive, very amiable and very clever.

"To me," said Caesar, "she appears one of these small town lasses who have a flirtation with a student, then with a captain, and finally marry some rich brute, and get fat, and turn into old sows, and grow moustaches."

"In that I think you are fundamentally unjust," said Alzugaray. "Amparito is not a small town lass, for she lives in Madrid almost all year. Besides, that makes no difference; what I have not observed is her committing any folly or impertinence."

"Dear man, it all depends on how you look at it. To me her conduct seemed bad, to you it seems all right."

"You are an extremist, for I can assure you that you were actually rude to her."

"Actually rude, I don't think; but I admit that I was cool and not very amiable."

"And why were you?"

"First, because it is politic of me, since Don Calixto's family do not care for Amparito; and secondly, because the little creature didn't please me, either."

"And why didn't she please you? For no reason at all?"

"I am not partial to the platyrrhine races."

"What nonsense! And you wish to look at things clearly! A man that judges people by their noses!"

"It seems to you little to go on? A brunette girl, brachicephalic and rather platyrrhine. . . . There is no more to say."

"And if she had been blond, dolichocephalic, and long-nosed, she would have seemed all right to you."

"Her ethnic type would have seemed all right."

"Let's not discuss it. What's the use? But I feel that you are arbitrary to an extreme."

"If she knew of our discussion, the young thing couldn't complain, because if she has had a systematic detractor in me, she has found an enthusiastic defender in you."

"Yes, dear man; it is only at such long intervals that I see a person with ingenuousness and enthusiasm, that when I do meet one, I get a real joy from it."

"You are a sentimentalist."

"That's true; and you have become an inquisitor."

"Most certainly. I believe we agree on that and on all the rest."

"I think so. All right. Good-bye!" said Alzugaray, ill-humouredly.

"Salutations!" replied Caesar.

VI

UNCLE CHINAMAN

CIDONES

CAESAR impatiently awaited Señor Peribáñez's reply, so that he might return to Madrid. He was fed up with Don Calixto's conversation and his wife's, and with the familiarity they had established with him.

Alzugaray, on the other hand, was entertained and content. Amparito's father showed a great liking for him and took him everywhere in his automobile.

Caesar, in order to satisfy his requirements for isolation, had begun to get up very early and take walks on the highway. He almost always walked too far, and was done up for the whole day, and at first he slept badly at night.

He wanted to see, one by one, the parts of his future realm, the scene where his initiative was to bear seed and his plans to be realized.

A lot of ideas occurred to him: to build a bridge here, to take advantage there of the fall of the river and establish a big electric plant for industrial purposes. He would have liked to change everything he saw, in an instant.

To think of these sleeping forces irritated him: the waterfall, lost without leaving its energy anywhere; the ravine, which might be transformed into an irrigation reservoir; the river, which was flowing gently without fertilizing the fields; the land around the hermitage, which might have been converted into a park, with a bright, gay schoolhouse; all these things that could be done and were not done, seemed to him more real than the people with whom he talked and lived.

One morning Caesar walked to Cidones; the sun shone

strongly on the highway, and he reached the town choked and thirsty.

The streets of Cidones were so narrow, so cold and damp, that Caesar shivered on entering the first one, and he turned back, and instead of going inside that polypus of dark clefts, he walked around it by the road. On a small house with an arbour, which was on a corner, he saw a sign saying: 'Café Español'; and went in.

THE CAFÉ ESPAÑOL

The café was dark and completely empty, but at one end there was a balcony where the sun entered. Caesar crossed the café and sat down near the balcony.

He called several times, and clapped his hands, and a girl appeared.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Something to drink. A bottle of beer."

"I will call Uncle Chinaman."

The girl went out, and soon after a thick, chubby man came in, with a bottle of beer in his hand, the label of which he showed to Caesar, asking him if that was what he wanted.

"Yes, sir; that will do very well."

The man opened the bottle with his corkscrew, put it on the table, and as he seemed to have a desire to enter into conversation, Caesar asked him:

"Why did the girl tell me that Uncle Chinaman would come? Who is the Chinaman?"

"The Chinaman, or Uncle Chinaman, as you like; I am."

"My dear man!"

"Yes, we all have nicknames here. They called my father that, and they call me that. Psh! It makes no difference. Because if a person is cross about it, it's all the worse. A few days ago a muleteer from a town in the district arrived here, and went to the inn, and as he had no nickname and they are very fond here in Cidones of giving one to every living creature, they said to him: 'No matter how short a while you stay *here, you will* be given a nickname'; and he answered con-

temptuously: 'Bah! Little fear.' Soon after, as he was crossing the square, a girl said to him: 'Good-bye, Little Fear!' and Little Fear it remained."

As Uncle Chinaman seemed very communicative, Caesar asked him some questions about life in the town.

Uncle Chinaman talked a great deal and with great clearness. According to him, the cause of all trouble in the town was cowardice. The two or three bosses of Castro and Father Martín ruled their party arbitrarily, and the rest of the people didn't dare breathe.

The poor didn't understand that by being united they could offset the influence of the rich, and even succeed in dominating them. Besides, fear didn't permit them to move.

"But fear of what?" said Caesar.

"Fear of everything; fear that they will levy a tax, that they won't provide work, that they will take your son for a soldier, that they will put you in jail for something or other, that the two or three bullies who are in the bosses' service might beat you."

"Does their tyranny go as far as that?"

"They do whatever they choose."

The Chinaman, who looked more like a Tartar, could make himself quite clear. If it had not been that he used the wrong words and had an itch for unusual ones, he would have given the impression of being a most intelligent man.

He said he was anti-clerical, declared himself a pantheist, and spoke of the "controversories" he maintained with different persons.

"A relative of mine who is a monk," he said, "is always reprehending me, and saying: 'Lucas, you are a Free-Thinker.' . . . 'And it's greatly to my credit,' I tell him."

Then, apropos of his monkish relative, he told a scandalous story. A niece of the Chinaman's, who had served for some while in the café, had gone to live with this monk.

Uncle Chinaman's account of it was rather grotesque.

"I had a niece," he said, "in the house, you know, very *spruce, very* good-looking, with breasts as hard as a rock. My

wife loved her as 'muchly' as if she had been our daughter, and so did I. Suddenly we heard the poor child had made a false step . . . or two false steps . . . and a little while later the girl was in a bad condition. Well, then; she went to town, and came back here to the café, and again we heard that the poor child had made a false step . . . or two false steps; and as I have daughters, you know, this 'pro . . . missiousness' didn't please me, and I went and told her: 'Look here, María, this isn't right at all, and what you ought to do is get out.' She understood me, and went away, and went to her uncle the monk, and the two of them formed a 'cohabit.' . . . Curse her! I went after them; and if I ever find them, I'll kill them. All very well for the poor child to make a false step . . . or two false steps; but this thing of getting into a 'cohabit' with a monk, and he her uncle, that is a 'hulimination' for the family. You may believe that we had to empty the cup down to the 'drugs.'"

FATHER MARTÍN

Caesar was listening to Uncle Chinaman with joy, when he saw two friars passing along the road below the balcony.

"They are from the monastery of la Peña, I suppose," he said.

The Chinaman looked out and replied:

"One of them is the prior, Father Lafuerza. The other is an intriguing young chap who has been here only a short while."

"Man, I have to see them," said Caesar.

"They are coming up the street now."

Uncle Chinaman and Caesar went to the other end of the café, and waited for them to pass.

The younger of the two friars had an air of mock humility, and was weakly-looking, with a straggling yellowish beard and a crafty expression; Father Martín, on the contrary, looked like a pasha parading through his dominions. He was tall, stout, of an imposing aspect, with a grizzly blond beard, blue eyes, and a straight, well-shaped nose.

The two friars came up the narrow, steep street, stopping to

talk to the women that were sewing and embroidering in the arcades.

Caesar and the Chinaman followed them with their eyes until the two friars turned a corner. Then Caesar left the café and walked back to Castro Duro.

VII

A TRYING SCENE

DON PLATÓN PERIBÁÑEZ'S reply was delayed longer than he had promised. No one knew whether the Duke of Castro Duro would get married or not get married, whether he would come out of prison or stay in. Caesar had nothing for it but to wait, although he was already fed up with his stay. Alzugaray had a good time; he visited the surrounding towns in the company of Amparito and her father. Caesar, on the other hand, began to be bored. Accustomed to live with the independence of a savage, the social train of a town like Castro irritated him.

His good opinion of people was in direct ratio to the indifference they felt for him. Amparito's father was one of those who showed most antipathy. Sometimes he invited him to go motoring, but only for politeness. Caesar used to reply to these invitations with a courteous refusal.

Amparito, who was doubtless accustomed to seeing everybody in town fluttering about her, was wounded at this indifference and took every chance to see Caesar, and then shot her wit at him and was sharply impertinent.

The young creature was more intelligent than she had at first appeared and she spoke very plainly.

Caesar could not permit a young girl to make fun of him and combat his ideas for her own amusement.

"Let's see, Moncada," Amparito said to him one day in the gallery at Don Calixto's. "What are your political plans?"

"You wouldn't understand them," replied Caesar.

"Why not? Do you think I am so stupid?"

"No. It is merely that politics are not a matter for children."

"Ah! But how old do you think I am?" she asked.

"You must be twelve or thirteen."

"You are a malicious joker, Señor Moncada. You know that I am almost seventeen."

"I don't. How should I know it?"

"Because I told your friend Alzugaray. . . ."

"All right, but I don't ask my friend what you have told him."

"It doesn't interest you? Very good. You are very polite. But your politics do interest me. Come on, tell me. What reforms do you intend to make in the town? What improvements are you going to give the inhabitants? For I warn you, Señor Moncada, that they are all going to vote against you otherwise. I will tell my father."

"I don't believe his political interest is so keen."

"It is keen enough, and my father will do what I tell him. My father says that you are ambitious."

"If I were, I should make love to you, because you are rich."

"And do you suppose I would respond?"

"I don't know, but I should try it, as others do; and you can see that I don't try."

Amparito bit her lips and said ironically:

"Are you reserving yourself for my cousin Adelaida?"

"I am not reserving myself for anybody."

"We couldn't say that you are very amiable."

"That is true. I never have been."

"If you keep on like that when you are a Deputy. . . ."

"What difference is it to you whether I am a Deputy or not? Is it because you have some beau who wants the place? If it is, tell me. I will withdraw in his favour. You must see that I can do no more," said Caesar jokingly.

"And how you would hate me then; if you had to give up being a Deputy on my account!"

"No."

"*You* hate me already."

"*No.* You are mistaken."

"Yes. I believe if you could, you would strike me."

"No, the most I should do would be to shut you up in a dark room."

"You are an odious, antipathetic man. I thought I rather liked you, but I only hate you."

"You know already, Amparito, that I am a candidate for Deputy, but not one for you."

"All right. All right. I don't wish to hear any more stupid remarks."

"The stupid remarks are those you are making."

And Caesar, who was beginning to feel angry, rebuked Amparito too severely, for her coquetry, her bad intentions, and her desire to humiliate and mortify people without any reason.

Amparito listened to him, pale and panting.

"And after all," said Caesar, "all this is nothing to me. If I am in your family's way, or even in your way, I can go away from here, and all is ended."

"No, do not go away," murmured Amparito, raising her handkerchief to her eyes and beginning to weep bitterly.

Caesar felt deeply grieved; all his anger disappeared, and he stood there, amazed, and not knowing what to do.

"Do not cry," exclaimed Caesar; "what will they think of me? Come, don't cry. It is childish."

At that moment Amparito's father entered the gallery, and he came running to the girl's side.

"What have you done to my daughter?" he cried, approaching Caesar threateningly.

"I, nothing," he said.

"You have. What has he done to you?" screamed the father.

"Nothing, Papa. Do not shriek that way, for God's sake," moaned Amparito; "I was entirely to blame."

"If he . . ."

"No, I tell you he hasn't done anything to me."

Caesar, who had remained motionless in face of Amparito's father's threatening attitude, turned on his heel, and went slowly out.

THE ETERNAL GAME OF DISDAIN

Caesar went back to the hotel, thinking very hard. Alzugaray asked him what the matter was, and Caesar told his friend what had happened in the gallery. On hearing the story Alzugaray assumed a look of deep desolation.

"I don't understand what is the matter with the girl, for her to show such antipathy for me," Caesar concluded.

"It is very simple," said Alzugaray, sadly; "the girl is interested in you. The eternal game of disdain has produced its effect. She has seen you show yourself indifferent toward her, speak curtly to her, and she has gone on thinking more and more about you, and now she thinks of nothing else. That is what has happened."

"Bah! I don't believe it. You act as if this were in a novel."

"It's no novel. It's the truth."

The next day, when Caesar got up, the maid handed him two letters. One was from Don Calixto and said that Señor Peribáñez accepted him as candidate. It had been learned that the Duke of Castro Duro had married his landlady in England; the arrangement with the Cuban gentleman was impossible, and the poor Duke would definitely have to winter in Paris, in the prison, along with the distinguished apaches, Bibi de Montmartre and the Panther of the Batignolles.

The other letter was from Amparito.

Don Calixto's niece told him he mustn't believe that she hated him; if she had said anything to him, it was without bad intention; she would be very happy if all his projects were realized.

Despite his ambitious plans and the desire he had that the question of his candidacy should be definitely settled, Amparito's letter interested him much more than Don Calixto's.

A new, disturbing element was coming into his life, without any warning and without any reason. He said nothing about *Amparito's* letter to his friend Alzugaray. He felt him to be *a rival,* and in spite of having no intentions of going further,

the idea of rivalry between them troubled him. He did not wish to offend him by taking the attitude of a lucky man.

He went out into the street and set off for a walk on the highway.

"It is strange," he thought, "this coarse psychology, which proves that a man and a woman, especially a woman, are not complex beings, but stupidly simple. The complex thing in a woman is not the intelligence or the soul, but instinct. Why does a woman rebuff a man who pleases her? For the same reason that the female animal repulses the male, and at the same time calls him to her.

"And this instinctive love, this mixture of hatred and attraction, is the curious thing, the enigmatic thing about human nature. The intellect of each individual is, by contrast, so poor, so clear!

"This girl, rich and attractive, flattered by everybody, is bored in this town. She sees a man that doesn't pay attention to her, who is after another goal, and simply for that reason she feels offended and hunts out a way to mortify him, for her entertainment and for spite; and when she finds that she doesn't succeed, she gets to thinking about him all the time.

"And this spite, this wounded vanity, is changed to an absorbing interest. Why shouldn't that absorbing interest be called love? Yes, she is in love, and finds great satisfaction in thinking so.

"She is not an insignificant girl, daughter of a commonplace gentleman; to herself, she is a romantic figure. She seems to be absorbed in another, and what is really the case is that she is absorbed in herself. How ridiculous this all is! . . . And this is life. Is the whole of life nothing, in reality, but ridiculous?"

Caesar returned home, and unknown to Alzugaray, wrote a letter to Amparito. He put the letter into the box, and then went to call on Don Calixto, and take leave of him. Don Calixto invited Caesar and Alzugaray to dinner the next day, and there were the same guests as the first time.

The dinner was cold and ceremonious. Amparito was grave,

like a grown person. Scarcely speaking, she replied with discreet smiles to Alzugaray's occasional phrases, but she was not in a humour to tease anybody.

The train started about the middle of the afternoon, and Don Calixto had arranged to have the carriage got ready, and to accompany the travellers to the station.

Caesar was uneasy, thinking of the leave-taking. The moment for saying good-bye to Amparito and her father, it seemed to him, would be a difficult moment. Nevertheless, everything went off smoothly. The father offered his hand, without grudge. Amparito blushed a little and said:

"We shall see each other again, Moncada?"

"Yes, I'm sure of it," replied Caesar; and the two friends and Don Calixto took the carriage for the station.

The two friends' return trip to Madrid was scarcely agreeable. Alzugaray was offended at Caesar's personal success with Amparito; Caesar understood his comrade's mental attitude and didn't know what to say or do.

To them both the journey seemed long and unpleasant, and when they reached their destination, they were glad to separate.

VIII

THE ELECTION

WHAT THEY SAID IN THE TOWNS

A SHORT while later the eventuality predicted by Caesar occurred. The Liberal ministry met a crisis, and after various intermediate attempts at mixed cabinets, the Conservatives came into power.

Caesar had no need to insist with the Minister of the Interior. He was one of the inevitable. He was pigeon-holed as an adherent, from the first moment.

The Government had given out the decree for the dissolution of the Cortes in February and was preparing for the General Election in the middle of April.

Caesar would have gone immediately to Castro Duro, but he feared that if he showed interest it would complicate the situation. There were a lot of elements there, whose attitude it was not easy to foresee; Don Platón's friends, Father Martín and his people, Amparito's father, the friends of the opposing candidate, García Padilla. Caesar thought it better that they should consider him a young dandy with no further ambition than to give himself airs, rather than a future master of the town.

He wrote to Don Calixto, and Don Calixto told him there was no hurry, everything was in order; it would be sufficient for him to appear five or six days before the election.

Caesar was impatient to begin his task, and it occurred to him that he might visit the towns that made up the district, without saying anything to anybody or making himself known. The excursion commenced at the beginning of the month of April. He left the train at a station before Castro. He bought

a horse and went about through the towns. Nobody in the villages knew that there was going to be an election; such things made no difference to anybody.

After the inauguration of a new Government there was a little revolution in each village, produced by the change of the town-council and by the distribution of all the jobs that were municipal spoils, which passed from the hands of those calling themselves Liberals to the hands of those calling themselves Conservatives.

Caesar discovered that besides the Liberal García Padilla, there was another candidate, protected by Father Martín Lafuerza; but it looked as if the Clericals were going to abandon him. In a town named Val de San Gil, the schoolmaster explained to him, with some fantastic details, the politics of Don Calixto. The schoolmaster was a Liberal and a frank, brusque, intelligent man, but he formed his judgment of Don Calixto's politics on the prejudices of a Republican paper in Madrid, which was the only one he read.

According to him, Señor Moncada, whom nobody knew, was nothing more than a figure-head for the Jesuits. Father Martín Lafuerza was getting possession of too much land in Castro, and wanted everything to belong to his monastery. The Jesuits had learned of this and were sending young Moncada to undo the Franciscan friar's combinations and establish the reign of the Loyolists.

In another place, named Villavieja, Caesar found that the four or five persons interested in Castrian politics were against him. It seemed that the Conservative candidate they wanted was the one protected by Father Martín, who had promised them results greatly to their advantage.

In general, the people in the towns were not up on politics; when Caesar asked them what they thought about the different questions that interest a country, they shrugged their shoulders.

In the outlying hamlets they didn't know either who the king was or what his name was.

The only way in which the trip was of service to the future candidate was by giving him an idea of how elections were

carried on, by teaching him who carried the returns to Don Calixto, and showing him which of these people could be warranted to be honourable and which were rascals.

INDIFFERENCE IN CASTRO

Three days before the election Caesar appeared in Castro and went to stay at Don Calixto's house. Nobody knew about his expedition in the environs. There were no preparations whatever. People said they were going to change Deputies; but really this was of no great moment in the life of the town.

Saturday night the party committee met in the Casino at seven. Caesar arrived a few minutes early; no one was there. He was shown into a shabby salon, lighted by an oil lamp.

It was cold in the room, and Caesar walked about while he waited. On the ceiling a complete canopy of spider-webs, like dusty silver, trembled in every draught.

At half-past eight the first members of the committee arrived; the others kept on coming lazily in. Each one had some pretext to excuse his being late.

The fact was that the matter interested nobody; the politics of the district were going to go on as formerly, and really it wasn't worth while thinking about. Caesar was a decorative figure with no background.

At nine all the members of the committee were in the Casino. Don Calixto made a speech which he prolonged in an alarming manner. Caesar answered him in another speech, which was heard with absolute coldness.

Then a frantic gabbling let loose; everybody wanted to talk. They abandoned themselves fruitfully to distinctions. "If it is certain that. . . . Although it is true. . . . Not so much because . . ." and they eulogized one another as orators, with great gravity.

The next day, Sunday, the proclamation of the candidates took place. They were three: Moncada, Governmental; García Padilla, Liberal; and San Román, Republican.

San Román was the old Republican bookseller, it was sure

beforehand that he couldn't win, but it suited Caesar that he should run, so that the Workmen's Club elements should not vote for the Liberal candidate.

Two days before the election Caesar went to Cidones and entered the Café Español.

He asked for Uncle Chinaman, and told him that he was the future Deputy. Uncle Chinaman recognized the young man with whom he had talked some months previous in his café, he remembered him with pleasure, and received him with great demonstrations.

"Man," Caesar said to him, "I want you to do me a favour."

"Only tell me."

"It is a question about the election."

"Good. Let's hear what it is."

"There are several towns where Padilla's adherents are ready, after the count, to change the real returns for forged ones. Everything is prepared for it. As I have sent people to their voting-places, they intend to make the change on the road, taking the returns from the messengers and giving them forged ones instead. I want twenty or thirty reliable men to send, four by four, to accompany the messengers that come with the returns, or else to carry them themselves."

"All right, I will get them for you," said Uncle Chinaman.

"How much money do you need?"

"Twenty dollars will do me."

"Take forty."

"All right. Which towns are they?"

Caesar told him the names of the towns where he feared substitution. Then he warned him:

"You will say nothing about this."

"Nothing."

Caesar gave precise instructions to the landlord of the café, and on bidding Uncle Chinaman good-bye, he told him:

"I know already that you are really on my side."

"You believe so?"

"*Yes.*"

On Sunday the elections began with absolute inanimation. In the city the Republicans were getting the majority, especially in the suburbs. Padilla was far behind. Nevertheless, it was said at the Casino that it was possible Padilla would finally win the election, because he might have an overwhelming majority in five or six rural wards.

At four in the afternoon the results in the city gave the victory to Moncada. Next to him came San Román, and in the last place Padilla.

The returns began to come in from the villages. In all of them the results were similar. It was found that the official element voted for the Government candidate, and those who had been attached to the preceding town-council for the Liberal.

At eight in the evening the returns arrived from the first village where Padilla expected a victory. The messenger, surrounded by four men from Cidones, was in a terrified condition. He handed over the returns and left. The result was the same as in all the other rural districts.

In one village alone, the presiding officer had been able to evade the vigilance of the guards sent by Caesar and Uncle Chinaman, and change the number of votes in the returns; but despite this, the election was won for Caesar.

The next day the exact result of the election was known. It stood:

Moncada, 3705.

García Padilla, 1823.

San Román, 750.

When it was known that Caesar had played a trick on his enemies under their noses, he came into great estimation.

The judge said:

"I believe you were all deceived. You supposed Don Caesar to be a sucking dove, and he is going to turn out to be a vulture for us."

Caesar listened to felicitations and accepted congratulations smiling, and some days later returned to Madrid.

IX

CAESAR AS DEPUTY

TRIPPING THEM UP

PEOPLE who didn't know Caesar intimately used to ask one another: "What purpose could Moncada have had in getting elected Deputy? He never speaks, he takes no part in the big debates."

His name appeared from time to time on some committee about Treasury affairs; but that was all.

His life was completely veiled; he was not seen at first nights, or in salons, or on the promenade; he was a man apparently forgotten, lost to Madrid life. Sometimes on coming out of the Chamber he would see Amparito in an automobile; she would look for him with her eyes, and smile; he would take his hat off ostentatiously, with a low bow.

Among a very small number of persons Caesar had the reputation of an intelligent and dangerous man. They suspected him of great personal ambition. It would not have been logical to think that this cold unexpansive man was, in his heart, a patriot who felt Spain's decadence deeply and was seeking the means to revive her.

"No pleasures, no middle-class satisfactions," he thought; "but to live for a patriotic ideal, to shove Spain forward, and to form with the flesh of one's native land a great statue which should be her historic monument."

That was his plan. In Congress Caesar kept silence; but he talked in the corridors, and his ironic, cold, dispassionate comments began to be quoted.

He had formed relations with the Minister of the Treasury, a man who passed for famous and was a mediocrity, passed for

honourable and was a rogue. Caesar was much in his company.

The famous financier realized that Moncada knew far more than he did about monetary questions, and among his friends he admitted it; but he gave them to understand that Caesar was only a theorist, incapable of quick decision and action.

Caesar's friendship was a convenience to the Minister, and the Minister's to Caesar. In his heart the Minister hated Caesar, and Caesar felt a deep contempt for the famous financier.

Nobody seeing them in a carriage talking affectionately together could have imagined that there existed such an amount of hatred and hostility between them.

The majority of people, with an absolute want of perspicacity, believed Caesar to be fascinated by the Minister's brilliant intellect; but there were persons that understood the situation of the pair and who used to say:

"Moncada has an influence over the Minister like that of a priest over a family."

And there was some truth in it.

Caesar carried his experimental method over from the stock exchange into politics. He kept a note-book, in which he put down all data about the private lives of Ministers and Deputies, and he filed these papers after classifying them.

Castro Duro began to be aware of Caesar's exertions. The secretary of the municipality, the employés, all who were friends and adherents to the boss's group that Don Platón belonged with, began by degrees to leave Castro.

Those who had lost their jobs, and their protectors too, began to write letters and more letters to the Deputy. At first they believed that Caesar wasn't interested; but they were soon able to understand at Castro that he was interested enough, but not in them. The Minister of the Treasury served him as a battering-ram to use against the Clericals at Castro Duro.

Don Calixto was inwardly rejoiced to see his rivals reduced to impotency.

Caesar began to establish political relations with the Republican bookseller and his friends. When he began to perceive

that he was making headway with the Liberal and Labour element, he started without delay to set mines under Don Calixto's terrain. The judge, who was a friend of Don Calixto's, was transferred; so were some clerks of the court; and the Count of la Sauceda, the famous boss, was soon able to realize that his protégé was firing against him.

"I have nourished a serpent in my bosom," said Don Calixto; "but I know how I can grind its head."

He could not have been very sure of his strength; for Don Calixto found himself in a position where he had to beg for quarter. Caesar conceded it, on the understanding that Don Calixto would not take any more part in Castro politics.

"You people had the power and you didn't use it very well for the town. Now just leave it to me."

In exchange for Don Calixto's surrender, Caesar agreed to have his Papal title legalized.

At the end of a year and a half Caesar had all the bosses of Castro in his fist.

"Suppressing the bosses in the district was easy," Caesar used to say; "I managed to have one make all the others innocuous, and then I made that one, who was Don Calixto, innocuous and gave him a title."

Caesar did not forget or neglect the least detail. He listened to everybody that talked to him, even though they had nothing but nonsense to say; he always answered letters, and in his own handwriting.

With the townpeople he used the tactics of knowing all their names, especially the old folks', and for this purpose he carried a little note-book. He wrote down, for example: "Señor Ramón, was in the Carlist war; Uncle Juan, suffers with rheumatism."

When, by means of his notes, he remembered these details, it produced an extraordinary effect on people. Everybody considered himself the favourite.

CAESAR'S MANNER OF LIVING

Caesar lived simply; he had a room in an hotel in the Carrera de San Jerónimo, where he received calls; but nobody ever found him there except in business hours.

He used to go now and then to Alzugaray's house, where he would talk over various matters with his friend's mother and sister; he would find out about everything, and go away after giving them advice on questions of managing their money, which they almost always observed and followed.

Of all people, Ignacio Alzugaray was the most incredulous in regard to his friend; his mother and his sister believed in Caesar as in an oracle. Caesar often thought that he ought to fall definitely in love with Ignacio's sister and marry her; but neither he nor she seemed to have set upon passing the limits of a cordial friendship.

Caesar told the Alzugaray family how he lived and caused them to laugh and wonder.

He had rented a fairly large upper story in a street in Valle Hermoso, for five dollars. The days he had nothing to do he went there. He put on an old, worn-out fur coat, which was still a protection, a soft hat, took a stick, and went walking in the environs.

His favourite walk was the neighbourhood of the Canalillo and of the Dehesa de Amaniel.

Generally he went out of his house on the side opposite the Model Prison, then he walked toward Moncloa, and taking the right, passed near the Rubio Institute, and entered the Cerro del Pimiento by an open lot which he got into through a broken wall.

From there one could see, far away, the Guadarrama range, like a curtain of blue mountains and snowy crests; on clear days, the Escorial; Aravaca, the Casa de Campo, and the Sierra de Gredos, which ran out on the left hand like a promontory. Nearby one saw a pine grove, close to the Rubio Institute, and a valley containing market-gardens, and the ranges of the Moncloa shooting-school.

Caesar would walk on by the winding road, and stop to look

at the Cemetery of San Martín on the right, with its black cypresses and its yellowish walls.

Then he would follow the twists of the Canalillo, and pass in front of the third Reservoir, to the Amaniel road.

That was where Caesar would have built himself a house, had he had the idea of living retired.

The dry, hard landscape was the kind he liked. The mornings were wonderful, the blue sky radiant, the air limpid and thin.

The twilight had an extraordinary enchantment. All that vast extent of land, the mountains, the hills of the Casa de Campo, the cypresses of the cemetery, were bathed in a violet light.

In winter there were hunters of yellow-hammers and gold-finches in these regions, who set their nets and their decoys on the ground, and spent hours and hours watching for their game.

On Sunday, in particular, the number of hunters was very large. They went in squads of three; one carried a big bundle on his shoulder, which was the net all rolled up; another the decoy cages, fastened with a strap; and the third a frying-pan, a skin of wine, and some kindling for a fire.

Caesar used to talk with the guards at Amaniel, with the octroi-officers, and he got to be great friends with a little hunchback, a bird hunter.

It was curious to hear this hunchback talk of the habits of the birds and of the influence of the winds. He knew how the gold-finches, yellow-hammers, and linnets make their nests, and the preference some of them have for coltsfoot cotton, and others for wool or for cow's hair. He told Caesar a lot of things, many of which could have existed only in his imagination, but which were entertaining.

ONE DAY AT CHRISTMASTIME

One day at Christmastime Alzugaray went in the morning *to look for* Caesar. He knew where to find him and walked *direct to the* Calle de Galileo.

At the house, they told him that Caesar was eating in a tavern close at hand.

Alzugaray went into the place and found his friend the Deputy seated in a corner eating. He had the appearance of a superior workman, an electrician, carver, or something of the sort.

"If people find out you behave so extravagantly, they will think you are crazy," said Alzugaray.

"Pshaw! Nobody comes here," replied Caesar. "The political world and this are separate worlds. This one belongs to the people who have to shoulder the load of everything, and the other is a world of villains, robbers, idiots, and fools. Really, it is difficult to find anything so vile, so inept, and so useless as a Spanish politician. The Spanish middle class is a warren of rogues and villains. I feel an enormous repugnance to brushing against it. That is why I came here now and then to talk to these people; not because these are good, no; the first and the last of them are riff-raff, but at least they say what they mean and they blaspheme naïvely."

"What are you going to do after lunch?" Alzugaray asked him. "Have you got a sweetheart in one of the old-clothes shops of the quarter?"

"No. I was thinking of taking a walk; that's all."

"Then come along."

They left the tavern and went along a street between sides of sand cut straight down, and started up the Cerro del Pimiento. The soft, vague mist allowed the Guadarrama to stand out visible.

"This landscape enchants me," said Caesar.

"It seems hard and gloomy," responded Alzugaray.

"Yes, that is true; hard and gloomy, but noble. When one is drenched with a miserable political life, when one actually forms a part of that Olympus of madmen called Congress, one needs to be purified. How miserable, how vile that political life is! How many faces pale with envy there are! What low and repugnant hatreds! When I come out nauseated by seeing *those people;* when I am soaked with repugnance, then I come

out here to walk, I look at those serious mountains, so frowning and strong, and the mere sight of them seems like a purifying flame which cleanses me from meanness."

"I see that you are as absurd as ever, Caesar. It would never occur to anybody to come and comfort himself with some melancholy mountains, out here between an abandoned hospital, which looks like a leper-asylum, and a deserted cemetery."

"Well, these mountains give me an impression of energy and nobility, which raises my spirits. This leper-asylum, as you call it, sunken in a pit, this deserted cemetery, those distant mountains, are my friends; I imagine they are saying to me: 'One must be hard, one must be strong like us, one must live in solitude. . . .'"

They did not continue their walk much further, because the night and the fog combined made it difficult to see the path along the Canalillo, which made it possible to fall in, and that would have been disagreeable.

They returned the way they had come. From the top of a hill they saw Madrid in the twilight, covered with fog; and in the streets newly opened between the sides of sand, the lights of the gas-lamps sparkled in a nimbus of rainbow. . . .

X

POLITICAL LABOURS

MONEY ON THE EXCHANGE

ALTHOUGH Caesar did not distinguish himself especially in Congress, he worked hard. His activities were devoted mainly to two points: the stock exchange and Castro Duro.

Caesar had found a partner to play the market for him, a Bilboan capitalist, whom he had convinced of the correctness of his system. Señor Salazar had deposited, in Caesar's name, thirty thousand dollars. With this sum Caesar played for millions and he was drawing an extraordinary dividend from his stocks.

Their operations were made in the name of Alzugaray, whose job it was to go every month to see the broker, and to sign and collect the certificates. Caesar gave his orders by telephone, and Alzugaray communicated them to the broker.

Alzugaray often went to see Caesar and said to him:

"The broker came to my house terrified, to tell me that what we are going to do is an absurdity."

"Let it alone," Caesar would say. "You know our agreement. You get ten percent of the profits for giving the orders. Do not mix in any further."

Often, on seeing the positive result of Caesar's speculations, Alzugaray would ask him:

"Do you find out at the Ministry what is going to happen?"

"Pshaw!" Caesar would say; "the market is not a capricious thing, as you think. There are signs. I pay attention to a lot of facts, which give me indications: coupons, the amount shares advance, the calculation of probabilities, and I

compare all these scientific data with empirical observations that are difficult to explain. In such a situation, events are what make the least difference to me. Is there going to be a revolution or a Carlist war? . . . I am careless about it."

"But this is impossible," Alzugaray used to say. "Excuse me for saying so, but I don't believe you. You have some secret, and that is what helps you."

"How fantastic you all are!" Caesar would exclaim; "you refuse to believe in the rational, and still you believe in the miraculous."

"No, I do not believe in the miraculous; but I cannot explain your methods."

"That's clear! Am I to explain them to you! When you don't know the mechanism of the market! I am certain that you have never considered the mechanism of the rise produced by the reintegration of the coupon, or the way that rise is limited to double its value. Tell me. Do you know what that means?"

"No."

"Well, then, how are you to understand anything?"

"All right, then; explain it to me."

"There's no difficulty. You know that the natural tendency of the market is to rise."

"To rise and to fall," interrupted Alzugaray.

"No, only to rise."

"I don't see it."

"The general tendency of the market is to rise, because having to fall eighty *centimos*, the value of the coupon, every quarter, if the market didn't rise to offset that loss, shares would reach zero. . . ."

"I don't understand," said Alzugaray.

"Imagine a man on a stairway; if you oblige him to go down one step every so often, in order to keep in the same place as before he will necessarily have to go up again, because if he didn't do so, he would be constantly approaching *the front door*."

"*Yes, surely.*"

"Well, this man on the stairway is the quotation, and the mechanical task of constantly making up for the quarterly loss is what is called the reintegration of the coupon."

"You do not convince me."

Alzugaray didn't like listening to these explanations. He had formed an opinion that had not much foundation, but he would not admit that Caesar, by reasoning, could arrive at the glimmering of an inductive and deductive method, where others saw no more than chance.

CAESAR BEGINS HIS TASK

With the money he made on the market, Caesar was making himself the master of Castro Duro. He constantly assumed a more Liberal attitude in the Chamber, and was in a position to abandon the Conservative majority, on any pretext.

His plan of campaign at Castro Duro corresponded to this political position of his: he had rehabilitated the Workmen's Club and paid its debts. The Club had been founded by the workmen of a thread factory, now shut. The number of members was very small and the labourers and employés of the railway and some weavers were its principal support.

On learning that it was about to be closed for lack of funds, Caesar promised to support it. He thought of endowing the Club with a library, and installing a school in the country. On seeing that the Deputy was patronizing the Club, a lot of labourers of all kinds joined it. A new governing board was named, of which Caesar was honourary president, and the Workmen's Club re-arose from its ashes. The Republicans and the little group of Socialists, almost all weavers, were on Caesar's side and promised to vote for him in the coming election.

Various Republicans who went to Madrid to call on Caesar, told him he ought to come out as a Republican. They would vote for him with enthusiasm.

"No; why should I?" Caesar used to answer. "Are we going to do any more at Castro by my being a Republican than when I am not one? Besides the fact that I should not be elected on that ticket and should thus have no further influ-

ence, to me the forms of a government are indifferent; I don't even care whether it has a true ideal or a false one. What I do want is for the town to progress; whether by means of a dream or by means of a reality. A politician should seek for efficiency before asking anything else, and at present the Republican dream would not be efficient at Castro."

Most of the Republicans did not go away very well satisfied with what Caesar had said; and after leaving him, they would say:

"He is a very curious person, but he favours us and we'll have to follow him."

The reopening of the Workmen's Club in Castro was the chance for an event. Caesar was in favour of inaugurating the Club without any celebration, without attracting the attention of the Clericals; but the members of the Club, on the contrary, wished to give the reactionaries a dose to swallow, and Caesar could not but promise his participation in the inauguration.

"Would you like to come to Castro?" Caesar said to Alzugaray.

"What are you going to do there?"

"We are going to open a Club."

"Are you going to speak?"

"Yes."

"All right. Let's go, so that I can hear you. Probably you will do it badly enough."

"It's possible."

"And what you say won't please anybody."

"That's possible, too. But that makes no difference. You will come?"

"Yes. Will there be picturesque speakers?"

"There are some, but they are not going to speak. There is one, Uncle Chinaman, who is a marvel. In describing the actual condition of Spain, he once uttered this authoritative *phrase:* 'Clericalism in the zenith, immorality in high places, *the debt floating* more every day. . . .'"

"*That's* very good."

"It certainly is. He made another happy phrase, criticizing the Spanish administration. 'For what reason do they write so many useless papers?' he said. 'So that rats, the obscene reptiles, can go on eating them. . . . .'"

"That's very good too."

"He is a man without any education, but very intelligent. So you are going to come?"

"Yes."

"Then we will meet at the station."

CAN ONE CHANGE OR NOT?

They took the train at night and they chatted as they went along in it. Caesar explained to Alzugaray the difficulties he had had to overcome in order that the Workmen's Club could be reinstituted, and went on detailing his projects for the future.

"Do you believe the town is going to be transformed?" asked Alzugaray.

"Yes, certainly!" said Caesar, staring at his friend.

"So then, you, a Darwinist who hold it as a scientific doctrine that only the slow action of environment can transform species and individuals, believe that a poor worn-out, jog-trotting race is going to revive suddenly, in a few years! Can a Darwinist believe in a revolutionizing miracle?"

"Previously, no; but now he can."

"My dear fellow! How so?"

"Haven't you read anything about the experiments of the Dutch botanist Hugo de Vries?"

"No."

"Well, his experiments have proved that there are certain vegetable species which, all at once, without any preparation, without anything to make you expect it, change type absolutely and take on other characters."

"The devil! That really is extraordinary."

"Vries verified this rapid transformation first in a plant named Œnotheria Lamarckiana, which, all of a sudden, with

no influence from the environment, with nothing to justify it, at times changes and metamorphosizes itself into a different plant."

"But this transformation may be due to a disease," said Alzugaray.

"No, because the mutation, after taking place, persists from generation to generation, not with pathological characteristics, but with completely normal ones."

"It is most curious."

"These experiments have produced Neo-Darwinism. The Neo-Darwinists, with Hugo de Vries at their head, believe that species are not generally gradually transformed, but that they produce new forms in a sudden, brusque way, having children different from the fathers. And if such brusque variations can take place in a characteristic so fixed as physiological form, what may not happen in a thing so unstable as the manner of thinking? Thus, it is very possible that the men of the Italian Renaissance or the French Revolution were mentally distinct from their predecessors and their successors, and they may even have been organically distinct."

"But this overthrows the whole doctrine of evolution," said Alzugaray.

"No. The only thing it has done is to distinguish two forms of change: one, the slow variation already verified by everybody, the other the brusque variation pointed out by Hugo de Vries. We see now that the impulses, which in politics are called evolution and revolution, are only reflexions of Nature's movements."

"So then, we may hope that Castro Duro will change into an Athens?" asked Alzugaray.

"We may hope so," said Caesar.

"All right, let's hope sleeping."

They ordered the porter to prepare two berths in the car, and they both lay down.

THE RECEPTION

In the morning Caesar went to the dressing-room, and a short

while later came back clean and dressed up as if he were at a ball.

"How spruce you are!" Alzugaray said to him.

"Yes, that's because they will come to receive me at the station."

"Honestly?"

"Yes."

"Ha . . . ha . . . ha . . .!" laughed Alzugaray.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Caesar, smiling.

"At your having arranged a reception and brought me along for a witness."

"No, man, no," said Caesar; "I have arranged nothing. The workmen of the Club will come down out of gratitude."

"Ah, that's it! Then there will be only a few."

At this juncture the car door opened and a man in the dirty clothes of a mechanic appeared.

"Don Caesar Moncada?" he inquired.

"What is it?" said Caesar.

"I belong to the Castro Workmen's Club and I have come to welcome you ahead of anybody else," and he held out his hand. "Greetings!"

"Greetings! Regards to the comrades," said Caesar, shaking his hand.

"Damn it, what enthusiasm!" murmured Alzugaray.

The employee disappeared. On arriving at the station, Alzugaray looked out the window and saw with astonishment that the platform was full of people.

As the car entered the covered area of the station, noisy applause broke out. Caesar opened the door and took off his hat courteously.

"Hurrah for Moncada! Hurrah for the Deputy from Castro! Hurrah for liberty!" they heard the shouts.

Caesar got out of the car, followed by Alzugaray, and found himself surrounded by a lot of people. There were some workmen and peasants, but the majority were comfortable citizens.

They all crowded around to grasp his hand.

Surrounded by this multitude, they left the station. There

Caesar took leave of all his acquaintances and got into a carriage with Alzugaray, while hurrahs and applauses resounded.

"Eh? What did you think of the reception?" asked Caesar.

"Magnificent, my boy!"

"You can't say I behaved like a demagogue."

"On the contrary, you were too distant."

"They know I am like that and it doesn't astonish them."

Caesar had a rented house in Castro and the two friends went to it. All morning and part of the afternoon committees kept coming from the villages, who wanted to talk with Caesar and consult him about the affairs of their respective municipalities.

INAUGURATION OF THE CLUB

In the evening the Workmen's Club was inaugurated. Nobody in Castro talked of anything else. The Clerical element had advised all religious persons to stay away from the meeting.

The large hall of the Club was profusely lighted; and by half-past six was already completely full.

At seven the ceremony began. The president of the Club, a printer, spoke, and told of Caesar's benefactions; then the Republican bookseller, San Román, give a discourse; and after him Caesar took up the tale.

He explained his position in the Chamber in detail. The people listened with some astonishment, doubtless wishing to find an opportune occasion for applause, and not finding it.

Some of the old men put their hands to their ears, like a shell, so as to hear better.

Next, Caesar spoke about life in Castro, and pointed out the town's needs.

"You have here," he said, "three fundamental problems, as is the case with almost all towns in the interior of Spain. First: water. You have neither good drinking water, nor enough water for irrigation. For want of drinkable water, the mortality of Castro is high; for want of irrigation, you cannot cultivate more than a very small zone, under good conditions. For that reason water must be brought here, and an

irrigation canal begun. Second problem: subsistence. Here, as in the whole of Castile, there are people who corner the grain market and raise the price of wheat, and people who corner the necessities of life and put up their prices as high as they feel like. To prevent this, it is necessary for the Municipality to establish a public granary which shall regulate prices. For want of that, the people are condemned to hunger, and people that do not eat can neither work nor be free. Third problem: means of transport. You have the railway here, but you have neither good highways nor good byways, and transportation is most difficult. I, for my part, will do all I can to keep the federal government from neglecting this region, but we must also stir up the little municipalities to take care of their roads.

"These three are questions that must be settled as soon as possible.

"Water, subsistence, transportation; those are not matters of luxury, but of necessity, matters of life. They belong to what may be called the politics of bread.

"I cannot make the reforms alone; first, because I have not the means; next, because even supposing I had, if I must leave these improvements in a township that would not look after them, not take care of them, they would soon disappear; they would be like the canals dug by the Moors and afterwards allowed to fill up through the neglect of the Christians. That is what politics are needed for, to convince reactionaries.

"At the same time, looking toward the future, let us start the school, which I should like to see not merely a primary school, but also a school for working-men.

"Let us endeavour, too, to turn the field of San Roque into a park."

After explaining his program, Caesar called on all progressive men who had liberal ideas and loved their city, to collaborate in his work.

When he ended his speech, all the audience applauded violently. Alzugaray was able to verify the fact that the *majority of them had* not understood what Caesar was saying.

"They didn't understand anything. A few sparkling phrases would have pleased them much better."

"Ah, of course. But that makes no difference," replied Caesar. "They will get used to it."

The inauguration over, the bookseller, San Román, Dr. Ortigosa, Señor Camacho, who was the pharmacist that called himself an inventor of explosives, and some others, met in the office of the Club, and talked with great enthusiasm of the transformation that was obviously taking place at Castro.

XI

THE PITFALL OF SINIGAGLIA

A COMMISSION FOR THE MINISTER

A FEW days later, during Carnival, the Minister of the Treasury presented himself at Caesar's hotel. The famous financier was a trifle nervous.

"Come along with me," he said.

"Come on."

They got into a motor, and the Minister suddenly asked:

"Could you go to Paris immediately?"

"There's nothing to prevent. What is it to do?"

"You know that the great financier Dupont de Sarthe is studying out a plan for restoring the value of the currency of Spain."

"Yes."

"Well, today the Speaker asked me several times if it was ready. It is necessary for me to introduce it soon, as soon as possible, and along with the plan for restoring the currency, one for the suppression of the government tax."

"The Speaker wishes to have these plans introduced?"

"Yes, he wishes them introduced at once."

"That indicates that the Conservative situation is very strong," said Caesar.

"Obviously."

"And what do you want me to do?"

"Go to Dupont de Sarthe and have him explain his scheme clearly, and tell you the difficulties; if he has an outline of it, have him give it to you; if not, have him give you his notes."

"All right. Shall I go tonight?"

"If you can, it would be the best thing."

"There's nothing to prevent. Take me back to the hotel and I will pack."

The Minister told the chauffeur to go back to Caesar's house.

"As soon as you arrive, let me know by wire, and write to me explaining the scheme in the greatest possible detail."

"Very good."

"You will need money; I don't know if I have any here," said the Minister, feeling for his pocket-book.

"I have enough for the trip," replied Caesar. "But, as I might need some in Paris, it would not be a bad idea for you to open an account for me at a bank there, or else to give me a cheque."

The Minister vacillated, then went into the hotel writing-room and signed a cheque on a Parisian banker in the Rue de Provence, which he handed to Caesar.

"See you on your return," he said.

"Good-bye."

Caesar called a servant and bade him:

"Telephone to my friend Alzugaray. You know his number. Tell him to be here inside an hour."

"Very good, sir."

This arranged, Caesar went to the main door and saw that the Minister's motor was headed for down town. Immediately he took a carriage and went to the Chamber. The undersecretary of the Speaker was a friend of his; sometimes he gave him advice about playing the market.

Caesar looked him up, and when he found him, said:

"How are we getting on?"

"All right, man," replied the undersecretary.

"Come over here, so I can see you in the light," said Caesar, and taking him by the hand, he looked into his eyes.

"It's true," said the undersecretary, laughing, "that the situation is not very strong."

"What is the danger?"

"The only danger is your friend, the famous financier. He *is the one* who could play us a dirty trick."

"*Do you* suspect what it could be?"

"No. Not clearly. You must know better than any one else."

"I have just seen the Minister, and he gave me the impression of being satisfied."

"Then everything is all right. But I haven't much confidence."

Caesar left the undersecretary, went out of the Chamber, and returned home in the carriage. Alzugaray was waiting in the entry for him.

Caesar called to him from the carriage:

"I am going to Paris," he told him, "to spend a few days."

"Good."

"I must draw out what money I have in the Bank."

"Let's go there now."

They went to the Bank, to the paying teller, and Caesar drew out twenty thousand pesetas of his few months' winnings on the market.

"You are not going to play at all, this month?" asked Alzugaray.

"No, not this month."

They left the Bank.

"I will wire you my address in Paris," said Caesar.

"Very good. And nothing is to be done?"

"No. That is to say, my partner and I are not going to play. Nevertheless, I am going to leave you two thousand pesetas, and if you think well, you can use it as you choose."

"All right," said Alzugaray, pleased at Caesar's confidence in his talents for speculation.

"In case I need any information which had best not be public," Caesar went on, "I will wire you in code. Do you know the Aran code?"

"No."

"I will give it to you, directly, at my house. If you receive a telegram from me from Paris, beginning with your name: 'Ignacio, do thus or so,' you will know it is in the code."

"I follow you. What's up?"

"*An affair* the Minister is putting through, which we will

not let him pull off without getting our share out of him. I will explain it to you, when I come back."

"How long do you expect to be there?"

"Two weeks at most; but perhaps I'll come right back."

INDUCTION

On arriving at the train, Caesar bought all the evening papers. In one of them he found an article entitled: *The Projects of the Minister of Finance,* and he read it carefully.

The writer said that the Minister of Finance had never been so closely identified with the Conservative Cabinet as at that moment; that he had plans for a number of projects for the salvation of the Spanish Treasury, which he would briefly explain.

"It's a witty joke," thought Caesar.

He was too well acquainted with the market and monetary affairs in general, too well acquainted with the sterling worth of the famous financier not to understand the idea of his scheme.

Caesar knew that the Minister not only was not on good terms with his colleagues in the Government, but was at sword's points with them, and was moreover disposed to give up his portfolio from one day to the next.

Whence came this haste to launch the plan for the suppression of the government tax and restoring the value of the currency? Why did he send him, Caesar, on this errand, and not somebody in the Department?

His haste to launch the plan was easy to comprehend.

The Minister was about to give a decisive impulse to all stocks; the suppression of the affidavit and the restoring the value of the currency would shove up domestic paper in Spain and foreign stocks in France to extraordinary heights. Then a difficulty with the Speaker, a moment of anger, such as was to be expected in a character like the Minister's, would oblige him to offer his resignation . . . prices would take a terrible *drop, and the* Minister, having already planned for a big bear *scoop in* Paris, would clear some hundreds of thousands of

francs and keep his reputation as a patriot and an excellent financier.

Why was he sending Caesar? No doubt because he suspected his secretary, whom he had probably given similar missions to previously.

Caesar knew the Minister well. He had described him in his notes in these words: "He is dark and brachicephalic; a man of tradition and good common sense; average intellect, astute, a good father and a good Catholic. He believes himself cleverer than he really is. His two leading passions are vanity and money."

Caesar knew the Minister, but the Minister did not know Caesar. He imagined him to be a man of brilliant intellect, but incapable of grasping realities.

After thinking a long while over the business, while he was undressing to go to bed in the sleeping-car, Caesar said:

"There is only one thing to find out. Who is the Minister's broker in Paris, and who is his banker? With Yarza's assistance that is not going to be difficult for me to ascertain. When we know what broker he works through and what banker, the affair is finished."

Having concluded thus, he got into his berth, put out the light, and lay there dozing.

IN PARIS

On arriving at Paris next evening, he left his luggage in the hotel at the Quai d'Orsay station. He wired his address to the Minister and to Alzugaray, and went out at once to look for Carlos Yarza. He was unable to find him until very late at night. He explained to his friend what had brought him, and Yarza told him he was at his disposition.

"When you need me, let me know."

"Good."

Caesar went off to bed, and the next morning he proceeded to the banking-house in the Rue de Provence where he was to cash the cheque handed him by the Minister of the Treasury.

He entered the bank and asked for the president. A clerk

came out and Caesar explained to him that on arriving at his hotel he had missed a cheque for three thousand francs from the Spanish Minister of Finance. He introduced himself as a Deputy, as an intimate friend of the Minister's, and behaved as if much vexed. The department manager told him that they could do no more than take the number and not pay the cheque if anybody presented it for payment.

"You don't handle the Minister's business here?" asked Caesar.

"No, only very rarely," said the manager.

"You don't know who his regular banker is?"

"No; I will ask, because it is very possible that the chief may know."

The clerk went out and came back a little later, informing Caesar that they said the house the Spanish Minister of Finance did his banking with was Recquillart and Company, Rue Bergère.

The street was near at hand, and it took Caesar only a very little while to get there. The building was dark, lighted by electricity even in the daytime, one of those classic corners where Jewish usurers amass great fortunes.

There was no question of employing the same ruse as in the Rue de Provence, and Caesar thought of another.

He asked for M. Recquillart, and out came a heavy gentleman, a blond going grey, with a rosy cranium and gold eyeglasses.

Caesar told him he was secretary to a rich Spanish miner, who was then in Paris. That gentleman wanted to try some business on the Bourse, but was unable to come to the bank because he was ill of the dropsy.

"Who recommended our house to this gentleman?" asked the banker.

"I think it was the Minister of Finance, in Spain."

"Ah, yes, very good, very good! And how are we to communicate with him? Through you?"

"*No.* He told me he would prefer to have a clerk who *knows Spanish* come to him and take his orders."

"That is all right; one shall go. We happen to have a Spanish clerk. At what hour shall he come?" said M. Recquillart, taking out a pencil.

"At nine in the evening."

"For whom shall he ask?"

"For Señor Pérez Cuesta."

"At what hotel?"

"The one in the Quai d'Orsay station."

"Very good indeed."

Caesar bowed; and after he had sent Yarza a telephone message, making an appointment for after the Bourse at the Café Riche, he took an automobile and went to hunt for the great financier Dupont de Sarthe, who lived on the other bank of the Seine, near the Montparnasse station.

He had a large, sumptuous office, with an enormous library. Two secretaries were at work at small tables placed in front of the balconies, and the master wrote at a big Ministerial table full of books. When Caesar introduced himself, the great economist rose, offered his hand, and in a sharp voice with a Parisian accent, asked what he desired.

Caesar told him the Minister's request, and the great economist became indignant.

"Does that gentleman imagine that I am at his bidding, to begin a piece of work and stop it according as it suits him, and take it up again when he orders? No, tell him no. Tell him the scheme he asked me for is not done, not finished; that I cannot give him any data or any information at all."

In view of the great man's indignation, Caesar made no reply, but left the house. He lunched at his hotel, gave orders that if any one brought a letter or message for Señor Pérez Cuesta they should receive it, and went again to the Rue de Provence, where he said he had had the good luck to find his cheque.

With all these goings and comings it got to be three o'clock, and Caesar turned his steps toward the Café Riche. Yarza was there and the two talked a long while. Yarza knew of the manœuvres of the Minister of Finance, and he gave his opinion about them with great knowledge of the business questions. He

also knew Recquillart's clerk, the Catalan Pujol, of whom he had not a very good opinion.

The two friends made an engagement for the next day and Caesar hurried to his hotel. He wrote to the Minister, telling him what the fundamentals of Dupont de Sarthe's project were; and between his own ideas and those Yarza had expounded to him, he was able to draw up a complete enough plan.

"The Minister being a man who knows nothing about all this," thought Caesar, "when he understands that the ideas I expound are those of the celebrated Dupont de Sarthe, will find them wonderful."

RECQUILLART'S CLERK

After having written his letter and taken a little tea, he lay stretched out on a divan, until they brought him word that a young man was asking for Señor Pérez Cuesta.

"Send him up."

Señor Puchol entered, a dark little man who wore a morning-coat and had a hat with a flat brim edged with braid.

Caesar greeted him affably and made him sit down.

"But are you not Spanish?" Caesar asked him.

"Yes, I was born in Barcelona."

"I should have taken you for a Frenchman."

"In dress and everything else, I am a complete Parisian."

"This poor man is full of vanity," thought Caesar. "All the better." He immediately began to explain the affair.

"Look," he said, "the whole matter is this: the Spanish Minister of Finance, my chief, has dealings on a large scale with the Recquillart bank; you know that, and so do I; but the Recquillarts, besides charging an inflated commission, interfere in his buying and selling with so little cleverness, that whenever he buys, it turns out that he bought for more than the market price of the security, and whenever he sells, he sells lower than the quotation. The Minister does not wish to break off with the Recquillarts. . . ."

"*He can't*, you meant to say," replied Puchol, in an insinuating manner.

"Since you know the situation . . ." responded Caesar.

"Oughtn't I to?"

"Since you know the whole situation," continued Caesar, "I will say that he cannot indeed break off with the Recquillarts, but the Minister would like to do business with somebody else, without passing under the yoke of the chief."

"He ought to make arrangements with another broker here," said Puchol.

"Ah, certainly. I have brought some twenty thousand francs with that object."

"Then there is no difficulty."

"But we need a go-between. The Minister doesn't care to turn to the first banker at hand and explain all his combinations to him."

"That's where I come in."

"Good, but we must know beforehand how much you are to get. Your demands may be such that it would be better for him to stick to the Recquillarts."

"Recquillart gets ten percent of the profits, besides a small commission as broker. I will take five."

"It's a good deal."

"I will not accept less; the arrangement might cost me my career. Consult him. . . ."

"If I could consult him! The truth is that there may not be time. We will accept five."

"What does the Minister wish to speculate in? The same things as with Recquillart? Foreign Loans and Northerns?"

"Exactly. Just as before."

"All right. The investment, as you can see, is safe," Puchol continued. "I would put my fortune in it, if I had one. There are a lot of newspapers bought; all the financial reviews are predicting a rise."

The clerk took out a folded review and handed it to Caesar, who read:

"We are assured that the plan of the Spanish Minister of Finance *must* make foreign securities rise considerably. North-

erns will follow the same path, and there are indications that their rise will be very rapid and will cover several points."

"The field is going to be covered with corpses," said Caesar.

Señor Puchol burst out laughing; Caesar invited him to dine with him, and gave him a sumptuous dinner with good wines.

Puchol was absolutely vain, and he boasted of his triumphs on the Bourse; it was he who guided Recquillart in the dealings he had with Spaniards, in which they had plucked various incautious persons.

"How much will the Minister's operation amount to?" Caesar asked him.

"Nobody can prevent his making three hundred thousand, at the least. With the increase he has ordered you to make, it will come to six hundred thousand. We will gobble up the two points it falls."

"I don't know if there may have been some new order while I was in the train coming to Paris," said Caesar.

"No, his operation is all arranged," replied Puchol, and he got out a note-book and consulted it. "It will be like giving away bread. We are going to sell ten millions of Foreigns and five hundred Northerns on the seventeenth, the eighteenth, and the twentieth."

"And the scoop will take place?" asked Caesar.

"On the 27th."

"So that on those days we shall sell just as much again?"

"And we shall sell much dearer."

They dropped that point and talked of other things.

Señor Puchol was a literary man and was writing a symbolistic drama which he wanted to read to Caesar.

At twelve they said good-night. Puchol was to tell his chief that he had not been able to do any business with Señor Pérez Cuesta. In respect to the other matter, they had an engagement for ten the next morning at a café in the neighbourhood of the Bourse.

There were no great difficulties to overcome. They saw a broker named Müller. Caesar entrusted him with his twenty *thou*sand francs, and hinted that the speculation was being made

for some rich people, who would have no objection to making up any loss, if he should exceed the twenty thousand francs.

The broker told him he could play whatsoever sum he wished.

As Caesar had not entire confidence in Puchol, and did not care either to tell the broker that he was to begin only when the stocks fell, he brought Yarza into the deal.

Puchol was to say to Yarza: "The Minister has given the order to sell"; and Yarza would first verify this, if he could verify it; then he would tell the broker: "Sell." It might go as far as handling twenty millions of Foreigns and up to a thousand of Northerns.

In order to get all the ends well tied up, Caesar had to get from one place to another without a moment's rest.

IN MADRID

The trap being set, Caesar took the train, worn out and feverish. He arrived at Madrid, took a bath, and went to see the Minister; and after the interview went to his house in the Calle de Galileo and spent two days in bed, alone in the completest silence.

The third day Alzugaray arrived, anxious.

"What's the matter? Are you sick?" he asked.

"No. How did you know I was here?"

"Your janitress came to my house to tell me you were in bed."

"Well, there's nothing wrong with me, boy."

"You should know that there's a splendid chance to make some money, today."

"My dear fellow!"

"Yes, and we haven't done anything in the market, except one miserable little operation."

"And why do you think there is such a good chance?"

"Because there is, because everybody can see it," said Alzugaray. "Prices are going to rise with this project of the Minister of Finance's; they are going in for a big deal; everybody has been indiscreet, without meaning to be, and people on the

market are buying and buying. Everybody is sure of a rise . . . and we are doing nothing."

"We are doing nothing," repeated Caesar.

"But it is absurd."

"What's the date?"

"The twenty-second."

"The evening of the twenty-seventh we will talk."

"How mysterious you are, boy."

"I can't tell you any more now. If you have bought anything, sell it."

"But why?"

"I can't tell you."

"All right, when you get on these sibylline airs, I say no more. Another thing. Various gentlemen have come to tell me that they wanted to play the market; they have heard that it is about to go up. . . ."

"Who were they?"

"Among others, Amparito's father and Don Calixto García Guerrero."

"If they wish to give security, tell our broker, and I will sell them anything they want to buy."

"Really?"

"Really. I have my reasons for doing it."

"This time we are all going to make, except you."

"Dear Ignacio, I am at Sinigaglia."

"What does that mean?"

"If you have a moment free, read the history of the Borgias," murmured Caesar, turning over in bed.

The next few days Caesar lived in constant intranquillity. Yarza telegraphed him, saying that they had done the whole operation. On the 27th, in the afternoon, Caesar wandered toward the Calle de Alcalá; Madrid wore its normal aspect; the newspaper boys were calling no extras. More worried than he liked, Caesar went for his walk by the Canalillo and then shut himself in his house. In the evening he went out breathless and bought the newspapers. His first impression was one of panic; there was nothing; on reaching the third page he ut-

tered an exclamation and smiled. The Minister of Finance had just offered his resignation.

The next morning Caesar went to the hotel in the Carrera de San Jerónimo where he had a room, and in the afternoon to the Chamber. He telephoned to Alzugaray to come and see him after the exchange closed.

Alzugaray arrived, looking pale, in company with Amparito's father, Don Calixto, and the broker. They were all wretched. The news was horrible. Domestics had fallen two points and were still falling; in Paris the Foreign Loan had fallen more than four; Northern was not falling but tumbling to the bottom of a precipice.

"Did you know that the Minister was going to present his resignation?" asked the broker, in despair.

"I, no. How should I know it? Even the Minister himself couldn't have known it yesterday. But I had scientific data for not believing in that rise."

"I am ruined," exclaimed the broker. "I have lost my savings."

Don Calixto and Amparito's father had also lost very large sums, which Caesar won, and they were disconsolate.

When they were gone and only Alzugaray remained, he said to Caesar:

"And you have played in Paris, too, probably."

"Yes."

"On a fall?"

"Certainly."

"You are a bandit."

"This game, my dear Ignacio, based solely on events, is not a speculator's game, but is, simply, a hold-up. The other day I told you: 'I am at Sinigaglia.' Did you read the history of Caesar Borgia?"

"Yes."

"Well, what he did at Sinigaglia to the *condottieri*, to Vittellozzo, Oliverotto da Fermo, and his other two captain-adventurers, I have done to the Minister of Finance, to Don Calixto, Amparito's father, and many others."

And Caesar explained his game. Alzugaray was amazed.

"How much have you made?"

"From what these telegrams say, I think I shall go over half a million francs. From those beginners, Don Calixto and Amparito's father, I think I have made forty thousand pesetas."

"What an atrocious person! If the Minister should find out about your game."

"Let him find out. I am not worried. The famous financier, in addition to being an idiot, is an honourable rogue. He plays the market with the object of enriching himself and leaving a fortune to his repugnant children. I, on the other hand, play it with a patriotic object."

The matter didn't rest there: Puchol, carried away by an easily comprehensible desire for lucre, and thinking it brought the same amount to the famous financier whether he played through Recquillart or through Müller, had made the last bid for the Minister through the new broker.

The Minister's winnings diminished considerably and Caesar's gained in proportion. The illustrious financier, on learning what had happened, shrieked to heaven; but he said nothing, because of the secret transaction they had had together. Puchol was dismissed by Recquillart, and with the thirty thousand francs he collected from Caesar he set up for himself.

The Minister, a little later, went to Biarritz, to collect his share. On his return he sent Caesar a note, unsigned and written on the type-writer. It read:

"I did not think you had enough ability for cheating. Another time I will be more careful."

Caesar replied in the same manner, as follows:

"When it's a question of a man who, besides being an idiot, is a poor creature and a cheat like you, I have no scruple in robbing him first and despising him afterwards."

Some days later Caesar published an article attacking the retiring Minister of Finance and disclosing a lot of data and figures.

The Minister answered with a letter in a Conservative paper, *in which he* denied everything Caesar alleged, and said, with

contempt, that questions of Finance were not to be treated by "amateurs."

Caesar said that he considered himself insulted by the Minister's words, whom, however, he admired as a financier; and a few months later he joined the Liberal party and was received with open arms by its famous chief.

XII

LOCAL STRUGGLES

THE WATER SUPPLY

CAESAR had money in abundance, and he decided to exert a decisive influence on Castro Duro.

For a long while he had had various projects planned. He thought it was an appropriate moment to put them into practice.

The first that he tried to carry out was the water supply.

The Municipality had a plan for this in the archives, and Caesar asked for it to study. The scheme was big and expensive; the stream it was necessary to harness so as to bring it to Castro, was far away. Besides it was requisite to construct a piping system or an aqueduct.

Caesar consulted an engineer, who told him:

"From a business point of view, this is very poor. Even if you use the superfluous water, in a factory for instance, it will give you no results."

"What shall we do then?"

"The simplest thing would be to put in a pumping plant and pump up the river water."

"But it is infected water, full of impurities."

"It can be purified by filtering. That's not difficult."

Caesar laid this plan before the Municipality, and it was decided to carry it out, as the most practical and practicable. A company was formed to pump up the water, and work was begun.

The stockholders were almost all rich people of Castro, and the company drew up its constitution in such a manner that *the town* got scarcely any benefit out of it. They were not *going to* instal more than two public fountains inside the city

limits, and those were to run only a few hours. Caesar tried to convince them that this was absurd, but nobody paid any attention to him.

THE LIBRARY

A bit disappointed, he left the "Water Pumping Company" to go its way, and devoted himself entirely to things that he could carry out alone.

The first one he tried was establishing a circulating library of technical books on trades and agriculture, and of polite and scientific literature, in the Workmen's Club.

"They will sell the books," everybody said; "they will get them all soiled, and tear out the leaves. . . ."

Caesar had the volumes bound, and at the end of each he had ten or twelve blank sheets put in, in case the reader wished to write notes.

The experiment began; predictions were not fulfilled; the books came back to the library untorn and unspotted and with some very ingenuous notes in them. Lots of people took out books.

The clerical element immediately protested; the priests said in the pulpit that to send any chance book to working people's houses without examining it first, was to lead people into error. Dr. Ortigosa retorted that Science did not need the approval of sacristans. As, in spite of the clerical element's advice, people kept on reading, there were various persons that took out books and filled them with obscene drawings and tore out illustrations. Dr. Ortigosa sent Caesar a letter informing him what was happening, and Caesar answered that he must limit the distribution of books to the members of the Workmen's Club and people that were known. He bade him replace the six or seven books abused, and continued to send new ones.

The ferment kept the city stirred up; there were no end of heated discussions; lectures were given in the Club, and Dr. Ortigosa's paper, *The Protest,* came to life again.

"I am with you in whatever will agitate the people's ideas," *wrote Caesar;* "but if they start to play orators and revolution-

ists, and you folks come along with pedantic notions, then I for my part shall drop the whole thing."

When Caesar was in Castro, he spent his evenings at the Workmen's Club. They gave moving pictures and frequent balls. Caesar did not miss one of the Club's entertainments. The men came to him for advice, and the girls and the little boys bowed to him affectionately. There was great enthusiasm over him.

THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

Shortly after the initiation of these improvements in the Club, there appeared in Castro Duro, without fuss, without noise, two rather mysterious societies; the Benevolent Society of Saint Joseph and the Agricultural Fund. In an instant the Benevolent Society of Saint Joseph had a numerous array of members and patrons. All the great landholders of the region, including Amparito's father, bound themselves to employ no labourers except those belonging to the Benevolent Society. In the neighbouring villages the inhabitants joined *en masse.* At the same time as this important society, Father Martín and his friends founded the Castrian Agricultural Fund, whose purpose was to make loans, at a low rate of interest, to small proprietors.

The two Catholic institutions set themselves up in rivalry to the Workmen's institution. The town was divided; the Catholics were more numerous and richer; the Liberals more determined and enthusiastic. The Catholics had given their upholders a resigned character.

Moreover, the name Catholic applied to the members of the two Clerical societies made those who did not belong to them admit with great tranquillity that *they* were not Catholics.

The Clericals called their enemies Moncadists, and by implication Schismatics, Atheists, and Anarchists. Inside the town there was a Moncadist majority; in the environs everybody was a Catholic and belonged to the Benevolent Society.

Generally the Catholics were abused in word and deed by *the Moncadists*; the members of the Workmen's Club held those *of the* Benevolent Society for cowards and traitors.

Doubtless Father Martín did not wish that his followers should be distinguished by Christian meekness, and he appointed a bully whom people called "Driveller" Juan warden of the Benevolent Society. This Juan was a lad who lived without working; his mother and his sisters were dressmakers, and he bled them for money, and spent his life in taverns and gambling-dens.

"Driveller" began to insult members of the club, especially the boys, and to defy them, on any pretext. Dr. Ortigosa went to see Caesar and explained the situation. "Driveller" was a coward, he didn't venture beyond a few peaceable workmen; but if he had defied "Furibis" or "Panza" or any of the railway men that belonged to the Club, they would have given him what he deserved. But in spite of "Driveller's" cowardice, he inspired terror among the young boys and apprentices.

Dr. Ortigosa was in favour of getting another bully, who could undertake the job of cutting out "Driveller's" guts.

"Whom are we to get?" asked Caesar.

"We know somebody," said Ortigosa.

"Who is it?"

"'El Montes.'"

"What kind of a party is he?"

"A bandit like the other, but braver."

BANDITS

"El Montes" had just come out of Ocaña.

He was a Manchegan, tall, strong, robust, and had been in the penitentiary several times.

"And how do we manage 'El Montes'?" asked Caesar.

"We make him a servant at the Workmen's Club."

"He will corrupt the place."

"Yes, that's true. Then at the right moment we shall send him to the Café del Comercio. They gamble at that café; he can go there and in two or three days call a halt on 'Driveller' Juan."

"Good."

"We must arrange for you to dismiss the new judge and put in some friend of yours, and one fine day we will get a quarrel started and we will put all Father Martín's friends in jail."

"You two play atrocious politics," said Alzugaray, who was listening to the conversation.

"It's the only kind that will work," replied Ortigosa. "This is scientific politics. Ruffianism converted into philosophy. We are playing a game of chess with Father Martín and we are going to see if we can't win it."

"But, man, employing all these cut-throats!"

"My dear friend," responded Caesar, "political situations include such things; with their heads they touch the noblest things, the safety of one's native land and the race; with their feet they touch the meanest things, plots, vices, crimes. A politician of today still has to mingle with reptiles, even though he be an honourable man."

"Besides, we need have no scruples," added Ortigosa; "the inhabitants of Castro are laboratory guinea-pigs. We are going to experiment on them, we are going to see if they can stand the Liberal serum."

THE TWO ASYLUMS

A little after these rivalries between the Benevolent Society and the Workmen's Club, which stirred up every one's passions to an extreme never before known at Castro Duro, another motive for agitation transpired.

There were two asylums in the town; the Municipal Aid and the Asylum of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

The Municipal Aid had its own property and was wisely organized; the old people were permitted to go out of the asylum, they had no uniform, and from time to time they were allowed to drink a glass of something. In the Little Sisters' Home, on the contrary, discipline was most severe; all the inmates had to go dressed in a horrible uniform, which the poor hated; to be present, like a chorus, at the funerals of important persons; pray at every step; and besides all that, they were

forbidden under pain of expulsion, to smoke or to drink anything.

So the result was that there were abandoned old wretches, who, if they couldn't get a place in the Aid, let themselves die in some corner, rather than put on the uniform of the Little Sisters' Home, degrading in their eyes.

That asylum had no income, because its Catholic managers had eaten it all up. In view of the institution's bad economic condition, it occurred to Father Martín to consolidate the two; to make one asylum of the municipal and the religious, and to put it under the strict rule of the religious one. What Father Martín wanted was that the Little Sisters should have a finger in the whole thing, and that the income of one institution should serve for both.

Caesar threatened the mayor with dismissal if he accepted the arrangement, and insisted that the Liberal councilmen should not permit the fusion, which was to the great advantage of the Clerical party.

As a matter of fact, the plan came to nothing, and Caesar treated the Municipal Aid to two barrels of wine and tobacco in abundance, which aroused great enthusiasm among the old people, who cheered for the Deputy of their District.

Caesar rode over the situation on horseback; but the Clerical campaign strengthened at the same rate that popular sympathies went out toward him. In almost every sermon there were allusions to the immorality and the irreligion that reigned in the town. The support of the women was sought and they were exhorted to influence their husbands, brothers, and sons to resign from the Workmen's Club.

The old pulpit oratory began to seem mild, and on the feast of the Virgin of the Rock, a young preacher launched out, in the church, into an eloquent, violent, and despotic sermon in which he threatened eternal suffering to those who belonged to heretical clubs and would not return to the loving bosom of the Church. The homily caused the greatest impression, and there were a few unhappy mortals who, some days later, were reported as dead or missing at the Workmen's Club.

XIII

AMPARITO IN ACTION

LAURA AT CASTRO

A TIME for new elections arrived, and Caesar stood for Castro Duro. Don Calixto, who had married his two daughters and was bored at not being allowed to pull the strings in the town, decided to move to Madrid. First he had thought of spending only some time at the capital, but later he decided to stay there and he had his furniture sent down.

People said that Don Calixto had no great affection for the old palace of the Dukes of Castro, and Caesar proposed that he should rent the house to him.

Don Calixto hesitated; in Castro he would certainly have refused, but being in Madrid he accepted. His wife advised him that if he had any scruples, he should ask more rent. They came to the agreement that Caesar should pay three thousand pesetas a year for the part Don Calixto had formerly inhabited.

This time Caesar had the election won, and there was not the slightest fight. He was the boss of Castro, a good boss, accepted by everybody, save the Clericals.

Caesar had money, and he wrote to his sister to come and see him at Castro in his seigniorial mansion. Laura arrived at Madrid in the autumn, and the two went to Castro together.

Laura's appearance in the town created a great sensation. At first people said she was Caesar's wife. Others said she was an actress; until finally everybody understood that she was *his sister.*

Laura really took undue advantage of her superiority. She *was irresistibly* amiable and bewitching with everybody. The

majority of the men in Castro Duro talked of nothing but her, and the women hated her to the death.

Being a marchioness, a Cardinal's niece, and a Deputy's sister, gave her, besides, a terrible social prestige.

One person who clung to her, enchanted to have such a friend, was Amparito. She went to the palace in her motor at all hours, to see Laura and chat with her. In the afternoon the two of them used to walk in Amparito's father's property, where the labourers, who were threshing, received them like queens.

What enchanted Laura was the wild garden at Don Calixto's house, with its pomegranates and laurels, its tower above the river, full of climbing plants and oleanders.

"You ought to buy this house," she used to tell Caesar.

"It would cost a good deal."

"Pshaw! You could arrange that wonderfully. You would get married and live here like a prince."

"Get married?"

"Yes. To Amparito. That young thing is enchanting. She will make a splendid little wife. Even for your respectability as a Deputy, it would be fitting to marry. A bachelor politician has a poor look."

Caesar paid no attention to these suggestions and continued to lead an unsocial life. He covered the environs on horseback, found out everything that was going on and settled it. In this he set himself an enormous task, which was not notable for results; but he hoped to succeed in conquering the district completely, and then to extend his sphere of action to others and yet others.

After being a fortnight in Castro Duro, Laura went to Biarritz, as was her custom every year.

AMPARITO AND CAESAR

Caesar was left alone. He had seen Amparito with his sister many times but had scarcely ever exchanged more than a few words with her. One afternoon Caesar was in the gallery in

an arm-chair, with his feet high. He felt melancholy and lazy, and was watching the clouds move across the sky. Soon he heard steps, and saw Amparito with an old servant who had been her nurse.

Caesar jumped up:

"What's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"I came to get something Laura forgot," said Amparito.

"She forgot something?" asked Caesar stupidly.

"Yes," replied Amparito; and added, addressing the old woman:

"Go see if there is a little glass box in Señorita Laura's room."

The old woman went out, and Amparito, looking at Caesar, who was on his feet watching her nervously, said:

"Do you still hate me?"

"I?" exclaimed Caesar.

"Yes, you do hate me."

"I! I have never hated you. . . . Quite the contrary."

"Whenever you see me you get away, and just now you looked at me as if you were terrified. Have you such a grudge against me for a joke I played on you long ago?"

"I, a grudge! No. It is because I have the impression, Amparito, that you want to upset my plans, to make game of me. Why do you?"

"Do you think I try to amuse myself by worrying you?"

"Yes."

"No, that isn't true. You don't think so."

"Then why this constant inclination to distress me, to poke fun at me?"

"I never poked fun at you."

"Then I have made a mistake. . . . I had come to think that you took some interest in me."

"And so I did. I did take an interest in you, and I keep on taking an interest in you."

"*And* why so?"

"*Because* I see that you are unhappy, and you are alone."

"*Ah!* You are sorry for me!"

"Now you are offended. Yes, I am sorry for you."

"Sorry!"

"Yes, sorry. Because I see that you despise everybody and despise yourself, because you think people are bad, and that you are too, and to me this seems so sad that it makes me pity you deeply."

Caesar began to walk up and down the gallery, trembling a little.

"I don't see why you say this to me," he murmured. "I am a morbid man, with an ulcerated, wounded spirit. . . . I know that. But why say it to me? Do you take pleasure in humiliating me?"

"No, Caesar," said Amparito, drawing near him. "You don't believe that I take pleasure in humiliating you. No, you know well that I do not."

On saying this, Amparito burst into tears, and she had to lean against the gallery window, to hide her face and dissemble her emotion.

Caesar took her hand, and as she did not turn her head, he seized her other, too. She looked at him with her eyes shining and full of tears; and in that look there was so much attachment, so much distress, that Caesar felt a weakness in his whole frame. Then, taking Amparito's head between his hands, he kissed it several times.

She leaned her head on Caesar's shoulder and stood pressed against him, sobbing. Caesar felt a sensation of anguish and pain, as if within the depths of his soul, the strongest part of his personality had broken and melted.

They heard the footsteps of the old woman, coming back to say that she had found nothing in the room Laura had occupied during her stay.

Amparito dried her tears, and smiled, and her face was redder than usual. Presently she said to the nurse:

"Probably you didn't look well. I am going to go myself."

Amparito went out.

Caesar was pale and absorbed; he felt that something ex-

traordinary had happened to him. His hands trembled and things swam around him.

In a short while Amparito returned. She had a round glass box in her hand, which she said she had found in Laura's room.

"This afternoon I am going to Our Lady of the Rock," said Amparito. "Will you come, Caesar?"

"Yes."

"Then, good-bye till then."

Amparito gave him her hand, and Caesar kissed it. The old servant was dumfounded. Amparito burst out laughing.

"He is my beau. Hadn't you noticed it before?"

"No," said the old woman with a gesture of violent negation.

Amparito laughed again and disappeared.

The first days of his engagement Caesar was constantly intranquil and uneasy. He kept thinking that it was impossible to live like that, giving his whole attention to nothing except the desires of a girl. He imagined that the awakening would come from one moment to the next; but the awakening didn't arrive.

By degrees Caesar abandoned all the affairs of the district, which had taken all his attention, and took to occupying himself solely with his sweetheart. The whole town knew their relations and talked of the coming wedding.

That dazzling idyll intrigued all the girls in Castro. The truth was that none of them had considered Caesar a marrying man; some had imagined him already old; others an experienced and vicious bachelor, incapable of yielding to the matrimonial yoke; and now they saw him a youth, of distinguished type, with distinguished manners and looks.

Caesar went almost daily to Amparito's father's country-place. It was a magnificent estate, another ancient property of the Dukes of Castro Duro, with a house adorned with escutcheons, and an extensive stone pool, deep and mysterious. The garden did not resemble that at Don Calixto's house, for *that* one was of a frantic gaiety, and the one on Amparito's

father's estate was very melancholy. Above all, the square of water in the pool, whose edges were decorated with great granite vases, had a mysterious, sad aspect.

"Doesn't it make you very sad to look at this deep water in the pool?" Caesar asked his fiancée.

"No, it doesn't me."

"It does me."

"Because you are a poet," she said, "and I am not; I am very prosaic."

"Really?"

"Yes."

The more Caesar talked with Amparito, the less he understood her and the more he needed to be with her.

"We really do not think the same about anything," Caesar used to tell himself, "and yet we understand each other."

Many times he endeavoured to make a psychological résumé of Amparito's character, but he didn't succeed. He didn't know how to classify her; her type always escaped him.

"All her notions are different from mine," he used to think; "she speaks in another way, feels in another way, she even has a different moral code. How strange!"

Also, what Amparito knew was completely heterogeneous; she spoke French well and wrote it fairly correctly; in Spanish, on the other hand, she had no idea of spelling. Caesar was always stupefied on seeing the transpositions of h's, s's, and z's that she made in her letters.

There remained by Amparito, from her passage through the French school, a recollection of the history of France made up of a few anecdotes and a few phrases. Thus, it was not unusual to hear her speak of Turenne, of Francis I, or of Colbert. For the rest, she played the piano badly enough and with extremely little enthusiasm.

This was the part belonging to her education as a rich young lady; that which belonged to the country girl, who lived among peasants, was more curious and personal.

She knew many plants by their vulgar names, and understood their industrial and medicinal use. Besides, she spoke

in such pure, natural phrases that Caesar was filled with admiration.

Caesar had reached such a degree of exaltation that he thought of nothing any more, except his sweetheart. At night, before going to sleep, he thought of her deliriously. He often dreamed that Amparito had changed into the red-flowered oleander of the wild palace garden, and in every flower of the oleander he used to see Amparito's red lips and white teeth.

XIV

INTRANSIGENCE LOST

DISQUIET DISAPPEARS

THE wedding took place and Caesar had to compromise about a lot of things. It didn't trouble him to confess and receive communion; he considered those mere customs, and went to the church of the Plain to conform to these practices with the old priest who was a friend of Amparito's.

On the other hand, it did bother Caesar to have to suffer Father Martín in his house, who allowed himself to talk and give advice; and he was also irritated by the presence of certain persons who considered themselves aristocrats and who came to call on him and point out to him that it was now time to give up the rabble and the indigent and to rise to their level.

If he had not had so much to think about as he did have, he would have found this a good chance to show his aggressive humour; but all his attention was fixed on Amparito.

The newly married pair spent the first days of their honeymoon at Castro; then they went to Madrid, with the intention of going abroad, and afterwards they went back to the town.

The old palace of the Dukes of Castro was witness to their idyll.

At the end of some time Caesar felt tranquil, perhaps too tranquil.

"This, no doubt, is what is called being happy," he used to say to himself. And being happy gave him the impression of a limbo; he felt as though his old personality was dying within him. He could no longer recover his former way of life; all *his disquietudes* had vanished. He felt that he was balanced,

lacking those alternations of courage and cowardice which had previously formed the characteristic thing in him. It was the oasis after the desert; the calm that follows the storm.

Caesar wondered if he had acquired new nerves. His instinct to be arbitrary was on the downward track.

He could not easily determine what rôle his wife played in his inner life. He felt the necessity of having her beside him, of talking to her; but he did not understand whether this was mere selfishness, for the sake of the soothing effect her presence produced, or was for the satisfaction of his vanity in seeing how she gave all her thought to him.

Spiritually he did not feel her either identified with him or strange to him; her soul marched along as if parallel to his, but in other paths.

"All that men say about women is completely false," Caesar used to think, "and what women say about themselves, equally so, because they merely repeat what men say. Only when they are completely emancipated will they succeed in understanding themselves. It is indubitable that we have not the same leading ideas, or the same points of view. Probably we have not a similar moral sense either. Neither is woman made for man, nor man for woman. There is necessity between them, not harmony."

Many times, watching Amparito, he told himself:

"There is some sort of machinery in her head that I do not understand."

Noting his scrutinizing gaze, she would ask him:

"What are you thinking about me?"

He would explain his perplexities, and she would laugh.

SYMPATHY

Indubitably, there existed an instinctive accord of the sentiments between Amparito and him, an organic sympathy. She could feel for them both, but he could not think for them both; *each mental* machine ran in isolation, like two watches, which *do not hear* each other. She knew whether Caesar was sad or

joyful, disheartened or spirited, merely by looking at him. She had no need to ask him; she could read Caesar's face. He could not, on his side, understand what went on behind that little forehead and those moist and sparkling eyes.

"Are you feeling happy? Are you feeling sad?" he would ask her. He could not reach the point of knowing by himself.

"I never succeed in knowing what you want," he sometimes said to her, bitterly.

"Why, you always succeed," she used to reply.

Caesar often wondered if the rôle of being so much loved, whether wrong or right, was an absurd, offensive thing. In all great affections there is one peculiarity; if one loves a person, one gets to the point of changing that person to an idol inside oneself, and from that moment it seems that the person divides into the unreal idol, which is like a false picture of the adored one, and the living being, who resembles the idolized object very slightly.

Caesar found something absurd in being loved like that. Besides, he found that she was dragging him away from himself. After six months of marriage, she was making him change his ideas and his way of life, and he was having absolutely no influence on her.

Previously he had often thought that if he lived with a woman, he should prefer one that was spiritually foreign to him, who should look on him like a rare plant, not with one that would want to identify herself with his tastes and his sympathies.

With a somewhat hostile woman he would have felt an inclination to be voluble and contradictory; with a sympathetic woman, on the contrary, he would have seemed to himself like a circus runner whom one of his pupils is trying to overtake, and who has to run hard to keep the record where it belongs.

But his wife was neither one nor the other.

Amparito had an extraordinary insouciance, gaiety, facility, in accepting life. Caesar never ceased being amazed. She spent her days working, talking, singing. The slightest di-

version enchanted her, the most insignificant gift aroused a lively satisfaction.

"Everything is decided, as far as you are concerned," Caesar used to tell her.

"By what?"

"By your character."

She laughed at that.

It seemed as if she had chosen the best attitude toward life. She saw that her husband was not religious, but she considered that an attribute of men, and thought that God must have an especial complacency toward husbands, if only so as not to leave wives alone in paradise.

Amparito held by a fetichistic Catholicism, conditioned by her situation in life, and mixed with a lot of heterodox and contradictory ideas, but she didn't give any thought to that.

The marriage was very successful; they never had disputes or discussions. When both were stubborn, they never noticed which one yielded.

They had rented one rather big floor facing on the Retiro, and they began to furnish it.

Amparito had bad taste in decoration; everything loud pleased her, and sometimes when Caesar laughed, she would say:

"I know I am a crazy country girl. You must tell me how to fix things."

Caesar decided the arrangement of a little reception-room. He chose a light paper for the walls, some coloured engravings, and Empire furniture. Female friends found the room very well done. Amparito used to tell them:

"Yes, Caesar had it done like this," as if that were a weighty argument with everybody.

Amparito and her father persuaded Caesar that he ought to open an office. All the people in Castro lamented that Caesar did not practise law.

He had always felt a great repugnance for that sharpers' and skinflints' business; but he yielded to please Amparito, and set up his office and took an assistant who was very skilful in legal tricks.

Caesar was often to be found writing in the office, when Amparito opened the door.

"Do you want to come here a moment?" she would say.

"Yes. What is it?"

"Look and see how this hat suits me. How do you like it?"

Caesar would laugh and say:

"I think you ought to take off the flowers, or it ought to be smaller."

Amparito accepted Caesar's suggestions as if they had been articles of faith.

Caesar, on his part, had a great admiration for his wife. What strength for facing life! What amazing energy!

"I walk among brambles and leave a piece of my clothing on every one of them," thought Caesar, "and she passes artlessly between all obstacles, with the ease of an ethereal thing. It's extraordinary!"

It pleased Amparito to be thus observed.

Her husband used to tell her:

"You have, as it were, ten or twelve Amparitos inside of you; it often seems to me that you are a whole round of Amparitos."

"Well, you are not more than one Caesar to me."

"That's because I have the ugly vice of talking and of being consequential."

"Don't I talk?"

"Yes, in another way."

DOUBT

In the spring they went to Castro, and the members of the Workmen's Club presented themselves before Caesar to remind him of a project for a Co-operative and a School, which he had promised them. They were all ready to put up what was necessary for realizing both plans.

Caesar listened to them, and although with great coldness, said yes, that he was ready to initiate the scheme. A few days later, in Dr. Ortigosa's *Protest,* there was enthusiastic

talk of the Great Co-operative, which, when established, would improve, and at the same time cheapen necessary articles.

The same day that the paper came out with this news, a commission of the shopkeepers of Castro waited on Caesar. The scheme would ruin them. It was especially the small shopkeepers that considered themselves most injured.

Caesar replied that he would think it over and decide in an equitable manner, looking for a way to harmonize the interests of all people. Really he didn't know what to do, and as he had no great desire to begin new undertakings, he wanted to call the Co-operative dead, but Dr. Ortigosa was not disposed to abandon the idea.

"It is certain that if goods are made cheaper," said the doctor, "and the Co-operative is opened to the public, the shopkeepers will have to fight it, and then either they or we shall be ruined; but something else can be done, and that is to sell articles to the public at the same price as the tradesmen, and arrange it that members get a dividend from the profits of the society. In that way there will be no fight, at any rate not at first."

They tried to do it that way, but it did not satisfy the poor people, or calm the shopkeepers.

Caesar, who had lost his lust for a fight, put the scheme aside; and although it would cost him more, decided to have the construction of the school begun.

The Municipality ceded the lot and granted a subsidy of five thousand pesetas to start the work; Caesar gave ten thousand, and at the Workmen's Club a subscription was opened, and performances were given in the theatre to collect funds.

The school promised to be a spacious edifice with a beautiful garden. The corner-stone was laid in the presence of the Governor of the Province, and despite the fact that the founders' intention was to found a lay school, the Clerical element took part in the celebration.

When the work began, the majority of the members of the Club were shocked to find that the masons, instead of work*ing on* the same conditions as for other jobs, asked more pay,

as if the school where their sons might study were an institution more harmful than beneficial for them.

Caesar, on learning this, smiled bitterly and said:

"They are not obliged to be less of brutes than the bourgeoisie."

From Madrid Caesar continued sending maps for the school, engravings, bas-reliefs, a moving-picture machine.

Dr. Ortigosa and his friends went every day to look over the work.

A year from the beginning of work, the boys and girls' school was opened. Dr. Ortigosa succeeded in arranging that two of the three male teachers they procured were Free-Thinkers. One of them, a poor man who had lived a dog's life in some town in Andalusia, was reputed to be an anarchist. They appointed three female teachers too, two old, and one young, a very attractive and clever girl, who came from a town near Bilboa.

Caesar took part in the opening, and spoke, and received enthusiastic applause. Despite which, Caesar felt ill at ease among his old friends; in his heart he knew that he was deserting them. He now thought it unlikely, almost impossible, that that town should succeed in emerging from obscurity and meaning something in modern life. Moreover, he doubted about himself, began to think that he was not a hero, began to believe that he had assigned himself a rôle beyond his powers; and this precisely at the moment when the town had the most faith in him.

XV

"DRIVELLER" JUAN AND "THE CUB-SLUT"

A MURDER

"DRIVELLER" JUAN, the town dandy protected by Father Martín, had from childhood distinguished himself by his cowardice and by his tendency to bullying. His appearance was that of an idiot; people said he drivelled; whence they gave him the nickname of "Driveller" Juan. He lived by pretending to be terrible in the gambling houses, and bragged of having been in prison several times.

The Clericals had made "Driveller" the janitor of the Benevolent Society, and at the same time its bully, so that he could inspire terror; but as he was a coward in reality, and this was evident, he did not succeed in terrifying the members of the Workmen's Club.

"Driveller" Juan was tall, red-headed, with high cheek bones, knotty hands, and a pendulous lip; his father, like him, had been bony and strong, and for that reason had been called "Big Bones."

"Driveller," like the coward he was, knew that he was not filling his job; one day he had dared to go to a ball at the Workmen's Club, and San Román, the old Republican, had gone to him and tapped him on the arm, saying:

"Listen here, 'Driveller,' get out right now and don't you come back."

"Why should I?"

"Because you are not wanted."

Juan had gone away like a whipped dog. "Driveller" wanted to do a manly action, and he did it.

There was a boy belonging to the Workmen's Club, who was called "Lengthy," one of the few type-setters in the town, a

clever, facetious lad who now and then wrote an article for *The Protest.*

"Driveller" insisted that "Lengthy" wanted to make fun of him. No doubt he chose him for his victim, because he was so slim, lanky, and weak; perhaps he had some other reason for attacking him. One afternoon, at twilight, "Driveller" halted "Lengthy," demanded an explanation, insulted him, and on finding his victim made no reply, gave him a blow. The street was wet, and "Driveller" stepped on a fruit-skin and fell headlong. Seeing the bully infuriated, "Lengthy" started to run, came to an open door, and ran rapidly up the stairs. "Driveller," furious, ran after him. Pursued and pursuer went down a hallway and "Lengthy" managed to reach a door and close it. "Driveller's" revengeful fury was not satisfied; he lay in wait until "Lengthy," believing himself alone, tried to escape from his hiding-place and was walking down the hall, and then "Driveller" drew his pistol and fired with the mouth against "Lengthy's" shoulder, and left him dead. As it was a rainy day, both the dead man's footsteps and the murderer's could be followed and everything that had happened ascertained.

The impression produced in the town by this assassination was enormous. Some people said that Father Martín and his followers had ordered "Lengthy" killed. In the Workmen's Club there was talk of setting fire to the Benevolent Society of Saint Joseph and of burning the monastery of la Peña.

Caesar was in Madrid at the time of the crime. Some days later a committee from the Club came to see him; it was necessary to have a charge pushed and for Caesar to be the private attorney.

According to the Club people, the Clericals wanted to save "Driveller" Juan, and if he was not disposed of completely, he would begin his performances again.

Caesar could see nothing for it but to accept the duty which the town put upon him.

Because of the crime, the history of "Driveller's" family came to be public property. He had a mother and two sisters

who were seamstresses, whom he exploited, and he lived with a tavern-keeper nicknamed "The Cub-Slut," a buxom, malicious woman, who said horrible things about everybody.

LIFE OF "THE CUB-SLUT"

There were reasons for "The Cub-Slut's" being what she was. Her parents being dead when she was a baby, having no relatives she had been left deserted. A farrier they called "Gaffer," who seemed to have been a kind person, took in the infant and brought her up in his house. It was "Gaffer" who had given the nickname to the child, because instead of calling her by her name, he used to say:

"Hey, 'Cub-Slut!' Hey, little 'Cub-Slut!'" and the appellation had stuck.

When the girl was fourteen, "Gaffer" ravished her, and afterwards, being tired of her, took her to a house of prostitution in the Capital and sold her. "The Cub-Slut" left the brothel to go and live with an old innkeeper, who died and made her his heiress. Six years later she went back to Castro. Those that had seen her come back maintained that when she reached the town and was told that "Gaffer" had died a few months before, she burst into tears; some said it was from sentiment, but others thought, very plausibly, that it was from rage at not being able to get revenge. "The Cub-Slut" set up a tavern at Castro.

"Driveller" and "The Cub-Slut" got along well, although, by what any one could discover, "The Cub-Slut" treated the bully more like a servant than anything else.

"The Cub-Slut" was said to be very outspoken. One Sunday, on the promenade, she had answered one of the young ladies of Castro rudely. The young lady was the daughter of a millionaire, who had married after having several children by a mistress of pretty bad reputation. The millionaire's children had been educated in aristocratic schools, and his girls were very elegant young ladies; even the mother got to be refined and polished.

One Sunday, on the promenade, one of them, on passing near "The Cub-Slut," said in a low tone to her mother:

"Dear Lord, what riff-raff!"

And "The Cub-Slut," hearing her, stopped and said violently:

"There's no riff-raff here except your mother and me. Now you know it."

The young lady was so upset by the harsh retort that she didn't leave the house again for a long while.

Such rude candour on "The Cub-Slut's" part had made her feared; so that nobody durst provoke her in the slightest degree. Besides, her history and her misfortune were known and people knew that she was not a vicious woman, but rather a victim of fate.

The assassination of "Lengthy" was one of those events that are not forgotten in a town. "Lengthy" was the son of "Gaffer," "The Cub-Slut's" protector, and some people imagined that she had persuaded "Driveller" to commit the crime; but the members of the Workmen's Club continued to believe that it was a case of clerical revenge.

"THE CUB-SLUT'S" ARGUMENT

In the month of June, Caesar and Amparito went to Castro Duro.

One afternoon when Caesar was alone in the garden, a very buxom woman appeared before him, wearing a mantilla and dressed in black.

"I came in without anybody seeing me," she said. "Your porter, 'Wild Piglet,' let me pass. I know that Amparito is not here."

She didn't say "Your wife," or "Your lady," but "Amparito."

"Tell me what you want," said Caesar, looking at the woman with a certain dread.

"I am the woman that lives with 'Driveller' Juan."

"Ah! You are . . . ?"

"Yes. 'The Cub-Slut.'"

Caesar looked at her attentively. She was of the aquiline type seen on Iberian coins, her nose arched, eyes big and black, thin-lipped mouth, and a protruding chin. She noticed his scrutiny, and stood as if on her guard.

"Sit down, if you will, please, and tell me what you wish."

"I am all right," she replied, continuing to stand; then, precipitately, she said, "What I want is for them not to punish Juan more than is just."

"I don't believe he will be punished unjustly," responded Caesar.

"The whole town says that if you speak against him in court, the punishment will be heavier."

"And you want me not to speak?"

"That's it."

"It seems to me to be asking too much. I shall do no more than insist that they punish him justly."

"There is no way to get out of it?"

"None."

"If you wanted to . . . I would wait on you on my knees afterwards, I would make any sacrifice for you."

"Are you so fond of the man?"

"The Cub-Slut" answered in the negative, by an energetic movement of her head.

"Well, then, what do you expect to get out of him?"

"I expect revenge."

"The Cub-Slut's" eyes flashed.

"Is what they say about you true?" asked Caesar.

"Yes."

"The dead boy was the son of the man that sold you?"

"Yes."

"But to revenge oneself on the son for the sin of the father is horrible."

"The son was just as wicked as the father."

"So that you ordered him killed?"

"Yes, I did."

"*And* you come and tell that to me, when I am to be the *private* attorney."

"Have them arrest me. I don't care."

"The Cub-Slut" stood firm before Caesar, provocative, with flashing eyes, in an attitude of challenge.

"You hated that dead boy so much as this?"

"Yés, him and all his family."

"I can understand that if the father were alive, you might . . ."

"If he were alive! I would give my life to drag him out of his tomb, so as to make him suffer as much as he made me suffer."

Caesar vaguely remembered the story he had heard about this woman, whose adopted father had ruined her and then left her in a disreputable house in the Capital. In general, the most absolute lack of apprehension characterizes such village tragedies, and neither does the victim know she is a victim, nor the villain that he is a villain.

But in this case, judging by what "The Cub-Slut" was telling him, it had not been so; "Gaffer" had gone about it with a certain depravity, glutting his desires on her, and then selling her, putting her into an infamous house. The villain had been cruel and intelligent; the victim had realized that she was one, to the degree that her soul was filled with desires for vengeance.

"That man," "The Cub-Slut" ended, sobbing, "took away my name and gave me a nickname; took away my honour, my life, everything; and if I cannot be revenged on him because he is dead, I will be revenged on his family."

Caesar listened attentively to the woman's explanation, without interrupting her. Then, when she had finished speaking, he said:

"And why not go away?"

"Away? Where?" she asked, astonished.

"Anywhere. The world is so big! Why do you persist in living in the one spot where people know you and have a bad opinion of you? Go away from here. There are countries with more generous sentiments than these old corners of the world. You do not consider yourself infamous or vile."

"No, no."

"Then go away from here. To America, to Australia, any-

where. Perhaps you can reconstruct your life. At any rate, nobody will call you by your nickname; nobody will talk familiarly to you. You will conquer or you will be conquered in the struggle for life. That's evident. You will share the common lot, but you will not be vilified. Do go."

"The Cub-Slut" listened to Caesar with eyes cast down. When he ceased, she stood looking at him intently, and then, without a word, she disappeared.

XVI

PITY, A MASK OF COWARDICE

THE MOTHER

SOME days later Caesar was in his office, when a thin old woman, dressed in black, shot in, crossed the room, and fell on her knees before him. Caesar jumped up in disgust.

"What's this? What's going on here?" he asked.

Amparito entered the room and explained what was going on. The old woman was "Driveller" Juan's mother. People had told Juan's mother that the only obstacle to her son's salvation from death was Caesar, and she had come to implore him not to let them condemn Juan to death.

"My poor son is a good boy," moaned the old creature; "a woman made him commit the crime."

Caesar listened, silent and gloomy, without speaking, and then left the room. Amparito remained with the old woman, consoling her and trying to quiet her.

That night Amparito returned to the task, and dragged the promise from her husband that he would not act as private attorney at the trial.

Caesar was ashamed and saddened; he didn't care to go to see anybody; he was committing treason against his cause.

"Pity will finish my work or finish me," thought Caesar, walking about his room. "That poor old woman is worthy of compassion; that is undeniable. She believes her son is a good boy, and he really is a low, cowardly ruffian. I ought not to pay any attention to this plea, but insist on their condemning that miserable wretch to death. But I haven't any more energy, *I haven't any* more strength. I can feel that I am going to

yield; the mother's grief moves me, and I do not consider that if this bully goes free, he is going to turn the town upside down and ruin all our work. I am lost."

FLIGHT

Caesar confided to his wife that he was daunted; his lack of courage was a nightmare to him.

Amparito said that they ought to take a long trip. Laura had invited them to come to Italy. It was the best thing they could do.

Caesar accepted her solution, and, as a matter of fact, they went to Madrid and from there to Italy.

The Workmen's Club telegraphed to Caesar when the time for the trial came, and Amparito answered the telegram from Florence, saying that her husband was ill.

Never had Caesar felt so agitated as then. He bought the Spanish newspapers, and expected to find in some one of them the words: "Señor Moncada is a coward," or "Señor Moncada is a sorry creature and a traitor."

When they knew that judgment had been pronounced and Juan condemned to eight years in the penitentiary, they returned to Madrid.

Caesar felt humiliated and ashamed; he did not dare show himself in Castro. The congratulations that some people sent him on the restoration of his health made his cheeks hot with shame in the solitude of his office.

The editor of a newspaper in the Capital of the Province came to call on Caesar, who was so dispirited that he confided to his visitor that he was ready to retire from politics. Two days later Caesar saw a big headline on the first page of the Conservative newspaper of the Capital, which said: "Moncada is about to retire."

Amparito applauded her husband's decision, and Caesar made melancholy plans for the future, founded on the renunciation of all struggle.

A few days later Caesar received a letter from Castro Duro which made him quiver. It was signed by Dr. Ortigosa, by

San Román, Camacho, the apothecary, and the leading members of the Workmen's Club. The letter was in the doctor's handwriting. It read thus:

"Dear Sir: We have read in the newspaper from the Capital the announcement that you are thinking of retiring from politics. We believe this announcement is not true. We cannot think that you, the champion of liberty in Castro Duro, would abandon so noble a cause, and leave the town exposed to the intrigues and the evil tricks of the Clericals. There is no question in this of whether it would suit you better to retire from politics, or not. That is of no importance. There is a question of what would suit our country and Liberty better.

"If because of the seductions of an easy life, you should withdraw from us and desert us, you would have committed the crime of lèse-civilization; you would have slain in its flower the re-birth of the spiritual and civic life of Castro.

"We do not believe you capable of such cowardice and such infamy, and since we do not believe you capable of it, we beg you to come to Castro Duro as soon as possible to direct the approaching municipal elections.— Dr. Ortigosa, Antonio San Román, José Camacho."

On reading this letter Caesar felt as if he had been struck with a whip. Those men were correct; he had no right to retire from the fight.

This conviction supported him.

"I have to go to Castro," he said to Amparito.

"But didn't you say that . . . ?"

"Yes, but it is impossible."

Amparito realized that her husband's decision was final, and she said:

"All right; let us go to Castro."

XVII

FIRST VICTORY

THE Conservatives had come into power; the time to change the town government was approaching. It was customary at Castro, as in all rural districts in Spain, that in a period of Liberal administration the majority of the councillors elected should be Liberal, and at a time of Conservative government, they should be Conservative.

The former Liberal, García Padilla, had gone over to the Conservative camp, and one was now to see whether he would get his friends into the Municipality so as to prepare for his own election as Deputy later.

It was the first time there was going to be a real election at Castro Duro. Moncada's candidates were almost all persons of good position. Dr. Ortigosa and a Socialist weaver figured among the candidates, as representing the revolutionary tendency. The Liberals felt and showed an unusual activity and anxiety. Caesar started a newspaper which he named *Liberty*. Dr. Ortigosa was the soul of this paper, whose doctrines ran from Liberal Monarchy to Anarchy, inclusive. As the election drew nearer, the agitation increased.

In the two electoral headquarters established by Moncada's party, the coming and going never stopped; some enthusiastic Moncadists came to headquarters every fifteen minutes, to bring rumours going about and to get news.

Don So-and-So had said this; Uncle What's-His-Name was thinking of doing that; it was nothing but conferences and machinations. The painter had painted for them gratis a big poster expressing cheers for Liberty, for Moncada, Dr. Ortigosa, and the Liberal candidates. The café keeper brought chairs, without any one's asking him; somebody else brought a

brasier for the clerks; everybody was anxious to do something. The stock phrase, an electoral battle, was not for them a political commonplace but a reality. The most trivial things served as a motive for very long discussions. Such was their identification with the Idea, that it succeeded in wiping out selfish ends. They all felt honoured and enthusiastic, at least while it lasted.

People dreamed of the election.

When Caesar arrived at the electoral headquarters, it was always a series of exclamations, of embracing, of advice, that never ended.

"Don Caesar, such a thing is . . . Don Caesar, don't trust So-and-So."

"We must get rid of them."

"Not one of them ought to be left."

He used to smile, because finding himself really loved by the people had cleansed him of his habitual bitterness and his loss of spirits. When he had finished receiving recommendations and congratulations, he would go to an inside room, and there, in the company of a candidate or a secretary, would read letters and arrange what they had to do.

The most active of the candidates was Dr. Ortigosa.

Ortigosa was a narrow-minded, tenacious man. His chief hatred was for Catholicism and he directed all his attacks at the religion of his forefathers, as he ironically termed it.

He had founded a Masonic lodge, named the "Microbe," and whose principal characteristic was anti-Catholicism.

Ortigosa carried his propaganda everywhere. He stopped at every corner to speechify, to talk of his plans.

Caesar used his motor-car to go about among the villages in the district. They would go to four or five and talk from balconies, or very often from the car, like itinerant patent-medicine venders.

In the little villages these reunions produced a great effect. What was said served as a topic of conversation for a month.

Caesar had developed a clear, insinuating eloquence. He *knew how to* explain things admirably.

Padilla's followers were not asleep; but, as was natural, they took up the work in another way. They went from shop to shop, making the shopkeepers see the harmfulness of the Moncadist politics, promising them advantages. They threatened workmen with dismissal. There was no great enthusiasm; their campaign was less noisy, but, in part more certain.

All the Liberal element of Castro was wrought up, from the temperate Liberals, who remembered Espartero, to the Anarchists. "Whiskers" and "Furibis" were the only ones who got together in a tavern to talk about bombs and dynamite, and one could be sure that neither of them was capable of anything. Those two had nothing more to do with Ortigosa, considering him a deserter.

"You are imbeciles," the doctor told them, with his habitual fury. "This fight is waking the people up. They are beginning to show their instincts, and that makes a man strong. The longer and more violent this fight is, the better; progress will be so much quicker."

"Agitation, agitation is what we need," cried the doctor; and he himself was as agitated as a man condemned.

The Liberals won a great victory; they obtained eight places out of ten vacancies.

XVIII

DECLARATION OF WAR

THE new city government of Castro was the most extraordinary that could be imagined. Dr. Ortigosa presented motions which caused the greatest astonishment and stupefaction, not only in the town, but in the whole province. He conceived magnificent plans and extravagant ideas. He asked to have the teaching system changed, religious festivals suppressed and other ones instituted, property abolished, public baths installed, and that Castro Duro should break with Rome.

The doctor was a creature born to succeed those revolutionary eagle-men, like Robespierre and Saint Just, and condemned to live in a miserable chicken-yard.

One day when Caesar was working in his office, he was astounded to see Father Martín enter.

Father Martín greeted Caesar like an old acquaintance; he had come to ask him a favour. Suspicious, Caesar prepared to listen. After speaking of the business that had brought him, the friar began to criticize the town-government of Castro and to say that it was a veritable mad-house.

"Your friends," said the priest, smiling, "are unrestrained. They want to change everything in three days. Dr. Ortigosa is a crazy man. . . ."

"To my mind, he is the only man in Castro that deserves my estimation."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

"This demoniac says that for him traditions have no value whatsoever."

"*Oh! I think the same thing,*" said Caesar.

"Are you anti-historic?"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't believe it."

"Absolutely. Tradition has no value for me either."

"The basis of tradition," answered the friar, arguing like a man who carries the whole of human knowledge in the pocket of his habit, "is the confidence we all have in the experience of our predecessors. Whether I be a labourer or a pastor, even though I have lived fifty years, I may have great experience about my work and about life, but it will never be so great as the united experience of all those who have preceded me. Can I scorn the accumulation of wisdom that past generations hand down to us?"

"If you wish me to tell you the truth, for me your argument has no weight," answered Caesar coldly.

"No?"

"No. It is undeniable that there is a sum of knowledge that comes from father to son, from one labourer to another, and from one pastor to another. But what value have these rudimentary, vague experiences, compared to the united experience of all the men of science there have been in the world? It is as if you told me that the stock of knowledge of a quack was greater and better than that of a wise physician."

"I am not talking," answered the Father, "of pure science. I am talking of applied science. Is one of your universal savants going to occupy himself with the way of sowing or of threshing in Castro?"

"Yes. He has already occupied himself with it, because he has occupied himself with the way of sowing or threshing in general, and, what is more, with the variations in the processes that may be occasioned by the kind of soil, the climate, etc."

"And do you believe that such scientific pragmatism can be substituted for the natural pragmatism born of the people's loins, created by them through centuries and centuries of life?"

"*Yes.* That is to say, I believe it can purify it; that it can *cast out* of this pragmatism, as you call it, all that is wrong, *absurd,* and false and keep what good there may be."

"And for you the absurd and false is Catholic morality."

"It is."

"You are not willing to discuss whether Catholicism is true or is a lie; you consider it a ruinous doctrine which produces decadence. I have been told that you have stated that on various occasions."

"It is true. I have said so."

"Then we do not agree. Catholicism is useful; Catholicism is efficient."

"For what? For this life?"

"Yes."

"No. Pshaw! It may be useful when it comes to dying? Where there is Catholicism there is ruin and misery."

"Nevertheless, there is no misery in Belgium."

"Certainly there is none, but in that country Catholicism is not what it is in Spain."

"Of course it isn't," exclaimed the friar, shouting, "because what characterizes Spanish Catholicism is Spain, poverty-stricken, fanatic Spain, and not the Catholicism."

"I do not believe we are going to understand each other," replied Caesar; "what seems a cause to me is an effect for you. . . . Besides, we are getting away from the question. To you Castro's moral and intellectual state seems good, does it not?"

"Yes."

"Well, to me it seems horrifying. Sordid vice, obscure adultery; gambling, bullying, usury, hunger. . . . You think it ought to keep on being just as it was before I was Deputy for the District. Do you not?"

"I do."

"That I have been a disturbance, an enemy to public tranquillity."

"Exactly."

"Well, this state of things that you find admirable, seems to me bestially fanatical, repugnantly immoral, repulsively vile."

"Of course, for you are a pessimist about things as they are, like any good revolutionist. You believe that you are *going to improve* life at Castro. You alone?"

"I, united with others."

"And meanwhile you introduce anarchy into the city."

"I introduce anarchy! No. I introduce order. I want to finish with the anarchy already reigning in Castro and make it submit to a thought, to a worthy, noble thought."

"And by what right do you arrogate to yourself the power to do this?"

"By the right of being the stronger."

"Ah! Good. If you should get to be the weaker, you ought not to complain if we should misuse our strength."

"Complain! When you have been misusing it for thousands of years! At this very moment, we do the talking, we make the protests, but you people give the orders."

"We offset your idiotic behaviour. We stand in the way of your utopias. Do you think you are going to solve the problem of this earth, and that of Capital? Are you going to solve the sexual question? Are you going to institute a society without inequality or injustice, as Dr. Ortigosa said in *La Libertad* the other day? To me it seems very difficult."

"To me too. But that is what there is to try for."

"And when will you attain so perfect an arrangement, so great a harmony, as the Catholic, created in twenty centuries? When?"

"We shall attain a different, better harmony."

"Oh, I doubt it."

"Naturally. That is just what the pagans might have said to the Christians; and perhaps with reason, because Christianity, compared to paganism, was a retrogression."

"That point we cannot discuss," said Father Lafuerza, getting up.

Caesar got up too.

"In spite of all this, I admire you, because I believe you are sincere," said Father Martín. "But I believe you to be dangerous and I should be happy to get you out of Castro."

"I feel the same way about you, and I should also be happy *to get you* out of here, as an unwholesome element."

"*So that* we are open, loyal enemies."

"Loyal! Pshaw! We are ready to do each other all the harm possible."

"For my part, yes, and in any way," announced the priest with energy.

"I, too," Caesar answered; and he raised the curtain of the office door.

"Don't disturb yourself," said Father Martín.

"Oh, it's no trouble."

"Regards to Amparito."

"Thank you."

The friar hesitated about going out, as if he wanted to return to the attack.

"Afterwards, if you repent . . ." he said.

"I shall not repent," Caesar coldly replied.

"I will drink peace to you."

"Yes, if I submit. I will drink peace to you too, if I submit."

"You are going to play a dangerous game."

"It will be no less dangerous for you than for me."

"You are playing for your head."

"Pshaw! We will play for it and win it."

The friar bowed, and smiling in a forced manner, left the house.

XIX

THE FIGHT FOR THE ELECTION

THE Conservatives at Castro Duro were ready to commit the greatest outrages and the most arbitrary acts so as to win by any methods.

It was known that a committee consisting of García Padilla, Father Martín Lafuerza, and two Conservative councillors had gone to the Minister of the Interior to beg that Caesar's victory might be prevented by whatsoever means.

"It is necessary that Don Caesar Moncada should not be elected for the District," said Father Martín. "If he is, the town will remain subjected to a revolutionary dictatorship. All the Conservative classes, the merchants, the religious communities, fervently hope that Moncada will not be made Deputy."

The committee of Castrians visited other high personages, and they must have attained their object, because the municipal government was suspended a few days later, the Workmen's Club closed, the judge transferred, the Civil Guard was reinforced, and a police inspector of the worst antecedents was detailed to Castro as commissioner of elections.

The Governor of the Province, a political enemy of Caesar's, was a personal friend of his.

"For your sake I am ready to lose my future," he had said to him, "but as for your followers, there is nothing left for me to do but knock them over the head."

La Libertad, Caesar's newspaper, made a very violent campaign against García Padilla. Ortigosa succeeded in finding out that Padilla had been tried for embezzlement, and he published that fact.

The *Castro News,* on its side, insulted Caesar and called him a crooked speculator on the exchange, an upstart, and an atheist.

The rapidity and violence of the Government's methods produced an effect of fear on lukewarm Liberals; on the other hand, it moved the decided ones to show themselves all the more courageous and rash.

Moncada's party almost immediately took on a revolutionary character. The lodge, "The Microbe," was at work, and the most radical arrangements started there. It suited the Governernment and the Conservatives to have the Moncada party take this demagogic character. The commissioner had contaminating persons come on from the Capital for the purpose of sowing discord in the Workmen's Club.

These suspicious persons, directed by one they called "Sparkler," used to gather in the taverns to corrupt the workmen and the peasants, carrying on a propaganda that was anarchistic in appearance, but in reality anti-liberal.

"They are all the same," they used to say; "Liberals and Conservatives are not a bit different."

The drunkards and vagabonds were in their glory during those days, eating and drinking. Nobody knew for certain where the money came from, but everybody could make certain that it flowed profusely.

At the same time the commissioner had the most prominent workmen of the Club arrested and brought suit against them on ridiculous accusations.

THE MEETING

The Liberals tried to hold a manifestation in protest, but the commissioner and the mayor prohibited it.

The newspaper *La Libertad* explained what was going on, and was reprimanded.

A meeting was organized at the school; the governor had granted permission.

The school was not lighted, and Caesar sent a man to the *Capital for acetylene* lamps, which were put up on the walls, *and which made* a detestable smell. The reunion took place

at nine at night. Caesar presided, and had San Román, the bookseller, on his right, and Dr. Ortigosa on his left.

Behind them on a bench were some of the members of the Workmen's Club.

The audience was composed of the poorest people; the rich Liberal element was drawing back; there were day-labourers with blankets around their shoulders and mouths, women in shawls holding children in their arms. Among the audience were the *agents provocateurs* who doubtless had the intention of making a disturbance; but the Republican bookseller ordered them thrown out of the place, and, despite their resistance, he managed to have it done.

The chief of police, insolent and contemptuous, took his seat at the table with an officer of the Civil Guard in civilian's, who was there, he said, to take notes.

San Román, the bookseller, gave Caesar a paper with the names of those who were going to speak. They were many, and Caesar didn't know them.

The first to whom he gave the floor, in the order of the list, was a lame boy, who came forward on a crutch, and began to speak.

The boy expressed himself with great enthusiasm and admirable candour.

"Who is this youngster?" Caesar asked San Román.

"He is the best pupil in our school. We call him 'Limpy.' He comes of a very poor family. He came to the school a year ago, knowing nothing, and see him now. He says, and I think he is right, that if he keeps on studying, he will be an eminent man."

The audience applauded everything "Limpy" said, and when he finished they hailed him with shouts and cheers. As he went back to his seat, Caesar and San Román shook his hand effusively.

STAND FAST, FELLOW CITIZENS!

After "Limpy," various orators spoke, in divers keys: "*Furibis*," "Uncle Chinaman," "Panza," San Román, a

weaver, a railway employee, and Dr. Ortigosa. The last-named let loose, and launched into such violent terms that the audience shouted in horrified excitement. Caesar's speech recommended firmness, and caused scarcely any reaction. The note had been given by "Limpy," with his ingenuousness and his appealing quality, and by the doctor with the violence of his words.

The next day the Governor's commissioner gave orders to close the school, and Dr. Ortigosa and San Román were taken to jail.

POLITICAL TRICKS

It was impossible to carry on a campaign of popular agitation, and Caesar decided to open a headquarters for propaganda next door to each voting place.

Meetings in the villages had been suppressed, because at the least alarm, or even without any motive, the chief of police, with members of the Civil Guard, went in among the people and dispersed them by shoving and by pounding rifles on their feet.

The newspapers couldn't say anything without being immediately reported and suspended.

Caesar sent no telegrams of protest, but he kept at work silently. He was thinking of using all weapons, including even trickery and bribes.

García Padilla and the Government agents found this proceeding even more dangerous than the former. Caesar offered twenty dollars to anybody that would give information of any electoral sharp practices which could be proved. The week of the election he and his friends did not rest.

At one of the polls in Carrascal, where Caesar had a majority, the tile bearing the house-number had been changed by night. The real voters had to wait to cast their votes in one place, and meanwhile the urn was being filled with ballots for the Government candidate at another place.

In the hamlet of Val de San Gil, another trick was tried; the *polling place was* established in a hay-loft to which one went

up by a ladder. While the villagers were waiting for the ladder to be set up, the urn was being filled. When the ladder was put into place and the voters went up one by one, they found that they had all voted already. As the ladder was narrow, they had to go up singly, and it was not likely they would have ventured to protest. Besides, there were a number of ruffians in the place, armed with sticks and pistols, who were ready to club or to shoot any one protesting.

In spite of all, Caesar had the election won, always supposing that the Government did not carry things to the limit; but at the last moment he learned that more Civil Guards were going to come to Castro, and that the Government agents had orders to prevent Moncada's victory by any method.

In the evening on Saturday, Caesar was told that the commissioner was in a tavern, with others of the police, giving out ballots for illegal voters. Caesar went there alone, and entered the tavern.

The commissioner, on seeing him, grew confused.

"I know what you are doing," said Caesar. "Be careful, because it may cost you a term in prison."

"You are the one that may have to pay by going to prison," replied the inspector.

"Just try to arrest me, you poor fool, and I'll shoot your head off!"

The police inspector jumped up from the table where he was seated, and, as he went out, he let one of the ballots fall. Caesar looked over the men who were with the police inspector; one of them was "Sparkler." Some days before he had come to Moncada's headquarters to offer to work for him, and he was the director of the contaminating persons sent to Castro by the Government.

A CLANDESTINE MEETING

When he returned to the headquarters, they told him there was a meeting in "Furibis's" tavern at nine that night. Caesar got there a little later than the time set. The place was gloomy, and had some big earthen jars in it. They had

put a table at the back of this cave, and an acetylene light illuminated it.

Those present formed a semicircle around the table.

Caesar knocked at the tavern, and they opened the door to him; a workman who was speaking delayed his peroration, and they waited until Caesar had reached the table and got seated. The atmosphere was suffocating. Everything was closed so that the Civil Guards would not see the light through the windows and suspect that there was a meeting being held there. The workmen were, for the most part, masons, weavers, brickmakers. There were women there with their little ones asleep in their bosoms. The air one breathed there was horrible. It looked like a gathering of desperate people. They had learned that their arrested comrades had been beaten in the prison, and that San Román and Dr. Ortigosa were in the infirmary as a result.

EULOGY OF VIOLENCE

The excitement among those present was terrible. "Limpy" was the most strenuous; he was in favour of their all going out that moment and storming the jail.

When they had all spoken, Caesar got up and asked them to wait. If he won the election the next day, he promised them that the prisoners should be freed immediately; if he did not win and the prisoners remained there . . .

"Then what is to be done?" said a voice.

"What is to be done? I am in favour of violence," answered Caesar; "burning the jail, setting fire to the whole town; I am ready for anything."

At that moment he really did think he had been too lenient.

"Man's first duty is to break the law," he shouted, "when it is a bad law. Everything is due to violence and war. I will go to the post of danger this very second, whenever you wish. Shall we storm the jail? Let's go right now."

This storming of the jail didn't seem an easy thing to the others. One might try to climb down the hill and surprise the prison guards, but it would be difficult. According to

"Furibis," the best thing would be for ten or twelve of them to go out into the street with guns and pistols and shoot right and left.

At this disturbance the Civil Guard would come out, and that would be the moment for the others to enter the jail and drag the prisoners out into the street.

Some one else said that it seemed better to him for them to approach the Civil Guards' quarters cautiously, kill the sentinels, and take possession of the rifles.

"Decide," said Caesar; "I am ready for anything."

Caesar's attitude made the excited ones grow calmer and understand that it was not so easy to storm the jail.

It was about eleven when the meeting at the tavern ended. They had decided to wait and see what would happen the next day, and they left the place one by one.

"We will escort you, Don Caesar," several of them said.

"No. What for?"

"Remember there are people who might attack you. 'Driveller' Juan is at large in Castro."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"That bully can't do anything to me."

AT NIGHT

Caesar went out of the tavern, pulled down his hat, and wrapped himself in his cape. He had not brought the motor, to avoid being recognized. It was a cloudy night, but still and beautiful.

Before they got out of the town a small boy came up to Caesar.

"'The Cub-Slut' sent me to tell you to come to her house; she wants to speak to you."

"I will go tomorrow."

"No. You must come now, because what she has to say is *very important*," shouted the youngster.

"*Well, I* can't go now."

The youngster protested, and Caesar continued on his way.

"Limpy" and "Uncle Chinaman" followed him. Caesar was walking in the middle of the highway, when, about half way home, a man on the run passed him. No doubt he was going to give some signal.

"Limpy" and "Chinaman" shouted over and over:

"Don Caesar! Don Caesar!"

Caesar halted, and "Chinaman" and "Limpy" ran up to him.

"What's going on?" asked Caesar.

"They are lying in wait for you," said "Limpy." "Didn't you see a man go past running?"

"Yes."

"We are going to stay with you. We will sleep at your house," said "Chinaman," "and if they attack us, we will defend ourselves."

He showed a pistol which he carried in his sash.

The three walked on together, and as they passed a little grove in front of the palace, a shadow passed by, crawling, and fled away.

"He was there," said "Chinaman."

They went into the house. Amparito, with the old nurse, was praying before a lighted image.

XX

CONFIDENCE

YES, HE IS THE HERO

WHEN he got up, Caesar found a lot of letters and notices from his followers all over the district, giving him pointers.

With the help of a manservant who used to go about with him, he himself got the motor ready and prepared to visit the polls.

As he got into the car, the youngster of the night before appeared with a letter.

"From 'The Cub-Slut'; please read it right away."

"Give it to me; I will read it."

"She told me you were to read it right away."

"Yes, man, yes."

Caesar took the letter and put it distractedly into his pocket.

The motor started and Caesar did not read the note. At eight in the morning he was on his way to Cidones. The polls had been established legally.

It was raining gently. As he drew near Cidones, the sun appeared. The river was turbid and mud-coloured. Thick grey fog-clouds were rolling about the plain; when they gathered below the hill where Caesar stood, they gave it the appearance of an island in the middle of the sea. From the chimneys of the town the smoke came out like hanks of spun silver, and bells were ringing through this Sunday morning calm.

Caesar stopped at an inn which was a little outside the town. The blacksmith, an old Liberal, came out to receive him. The old man had been suffering with rheumatism for some while.

"How goes it?" Caesar asked him.

"Very well. I have been to vote for you."

"And your health?"

"Now that spring is coming, one begins to get better."

"Yes, that is true," said Caesar; "I hadn't noticed that the trees are in bloom."

"Oh, yes, they are out. In a little while we shall have good weather. It's a consolation for old folks."

Caesar took leave of the blacksmith and got into the motor.

CAESAR! CAESAR!

"Yes, spring is in flower," said Caesar. "I will remove all the obstacles and men's strength will come to life, which is action. This town, then others, and finally all Spain. . . . May nothing remain hidden or closed up; everything come to life, out into the sunlight. I am a strong man; I am a man of iron; there are no obstacles for me. The forces of Nature will assist me. Caesar! I must be Caesar!"

The automobile began to move in a straight line toward Castro.

The ground on both sides of the highway fled away rapidly.

The automobile lessened its pace at the foot of the hill, and began to climb.

It went in by an old gate in the wall, which was called the Cart Gate.

The street of the same name, a street in the poor suburb, was narrow and the houses low; it was paved with cobbles. A little farther along several lanes formed a crossroads.

This was a quarter of brothels and of gipsies who made baskets.

When he reached the crossroads, in the narrowest part there was a cart blocking the street. The automobile stopped.

"What's the matter?" asked Caesar, standing up.

At that moment two shots rang out, and Caesar fell wounded into the bottom of the car. The chauffeur saw that the discharges came from the low windows of a loom, and backing

the motor, he returned rapidly, passed out the Cart Gate, at risk of running into it, went down to the highway, and drove at high speed to Caesar's house.

A moment later "Driveller" Juan and "Sparkler" came out of the loom and disappeared down a lane. The judge who went to take depositions learned from the chauffeur that Caesar had received a letter as he was getting into the car. He had the wounded man's clothes searched, and they found "The Cub-Slut's" letter, in which she warned Caesar of the danger he was in. Fate had kept Caesar from reading it.

. . . . . .

THE RED FLAG

The news that Caesar was seriously wounded ran through the town like a train of powder.

A movement of terror shook everybody. "Limpy," "Furibis," and the other hysterical ones gathered at the tavern and agreed to set fire to the monastery of la Peña. "Furibis" had arms in his house and divided them among his comrades. A woman fastened a red rag to a stick, and they left Castro by different paths and met opposite Cidones.

Nine of them went armed, and various others followed behind.

On reaching Cidones, one of the party advanced up the lane and saw two pairs of Civil Guards. They discussed what they had better do, and the majority were in favour of going into Moro's inn, which was at the entrance to the town, and waiting until night.

They did go in there and told Moro what they had just done. The inn-keeper listened with simulated approval, and brought them wine. This Moro was not a very commendable party; he had been convicted for robbery several times and had a bad reputation.

While the revolutionists were drinking and talking, Moro stole out without any one's noticing, and went to see the chief *of the* Civil Guard, and told him what was going on.

"They are armed, then?" asked the chief.

"Yes."

"And how many are they?"

"Nine with arms."

"We are only five. Do you want to do something?

"What is it?"

"At dusk we will pass by the inn. I will knock. And you shall say to them: 'Here is the chief of the Civil Guard; hide your arms.' They will hide them, and we will arrest them."

"Shall I get something for doing this favour?" asked Moro.

"Naturally."

"What will they give me?"

"You will see."

The ruse worked as they had plotted it; Moro played the comedy to perfection.

On learning that the chief of the Civil Guard wanted to come in, the revolutionists, on the landlord's advice, left their arms in the next room. At the same instant the window panes burst to bits and the soldiers of the Civil Guard fired three charges from close up. Two women and four men fell dead; the wounded, among whom was "Limpy," were taken to the hospital, and only one person was lucky enough to escape.

FATE

At the chief headquarters of Moncada's followers, a strange phenomenon was noticed; on the preceding days they had been chock full; that night there were not over ten or a dozen men from the Workmen's Club collected by a table lighted by a petroleum lamp. The pharmacist, Camacho, presided.

The news of the election was worse every minute. At the last hour the Padillists, knowing that Moncada was wounded, were behaving horribly. In the polls at Villamiel the tellers had fled with the blank ballots, and the Conservative boss arranged the outcome of the election from his house.

As the teller from Santa Inés, who was a poor Liberal school-

master, was on his way from the hamlet with the papers, six men had seized him, had snatched the returns from him, changed all the figures, and sent them to the municipal building at Castro full of blots.

They had fired over twenty shots at the teller for Paralejo. Many of Moncada's emissaries, on knowing that Caesar was wounded and his campaign going badly, had passed over to the other party.

Only Moncada could have rallied that flight. His most faithful gave one another uneasy looks, hoping some one would say: "Come along!" so that they could all have gone. Camacho alone kept up the spirits of the meeting.

At nine o'clock at night the chief of police entered the headquarters, accompanied by two Civil Guards.

"Close up here, please," said the inspector.

"Why?" asked the pharmacist.

"Because I order you to."

"You have no right to order that."

"No? Here, get out, everybody, and *you* are under arrest."

Those present took to their heels; the pharmacist went to jail to keep San Román and Ortigosa company, and the Club was shut up. . . .

. . . . . .

The election was won by Padilla.

XXI

OUR VENERABLE TRADITIONS! OUR HOLY PRINCIPLES!

THE banquet in honour of Padilla was given at the Café del Comercio. All the important persons of the town, many of whom had been Caesar's adherents the day before, had gathered to feast the victor. The majority gorged enthusiastically, the chief of police distinguishing himself by his hearty applause. A fat lawyer presided, a greasy person with a black beard, a typical coarse, dirty, tricky Moor. Next to him sat a small attorney, pock-marked, pale of face. By dessert one no longer heard anything but cries of "Hurrah for Padilla!" among the smoke of the big cigars they were all smoking.

Then the lawyer with the black beard arose and began to orate.

He spoke slowly and with great solemnity.

"This meeting shows," he said in a strong and sonorous voice, "your enthusiasm and your loyalty for the good cause. Never, never will we permit outsiders devoid of religion and patriotism to upset the existence of our beloved city." (Applause.) "We will defend our venerated traditions by all the means in our power; we will not permit the hydra of anarchy to rise up in Castro; and if it should arise to attack our holy principles, we shall crush it under our heels." (Applause.) "When men turn their backs on God, when they preach the relaxation of discipline, and licentiousness, when they are not willing to acknowledge any authority, divine or human, then it is time for decent men to form a bulwark with their breasts, for the defence of their traditions. We are, before all else,

Catholics and Spaniards; and we will not consent to having Anarchists, Masons, sacrilegious persons get the mastery of this sacred soil, and wipe out its memories, and spot the most holy rights of our mother, the Church." (Ovation.)

"Hurrah for Jesus Christ and His Immaculate Church!" shouted a priest, a bit upset by his wine, in a raucous voice.

Next, the fat, greasy lawyer paraded all the glories of Spain, with their appropriate adjectives: the Cid, Columbus, Isabella the Catholic, the Great Captain, Hernán Cortés. . . . Then a couple of dozen orators spoke, and the meeting ended very late at night.

CASTRO DURO TODAY

Today Castro Duro has definitely abandoned her intentions of living, and return to order, as the weekly Conservative paper says; the fountains have dried, the school been closed, the little trees in Moncada Park have been pulled up. The people emigrate every year by hundreds. Today a mill shuts down, tomorrow a house falls in; but Castro Duro continues to live with her venerated traditions and her holy principles, not permitting outsiders devoid of religion and patriotism to disturb her existence, not spotting the most holy rights of the Church, our mother; enveloped in dust, in dirt, and in filth, asleep in the sun, in the midst of her grainless fields.